

THE AMERICAN NEPTUNE

MARITIME HISTORY & ARTS



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COVER ILLUSTRATION

Kuniyoshi Utagawa (1797–1861)

Whaling Scene, Goto and Hirado in Hizen Province. Varieties of Whales.

Colored woodblock triptych, published by Soshuya, Nihonbashi, Edo, ca 1840. From the series *Nippon Meisan Zukushi* (A complete list of Japanese well known products)

Kuniyoshi is best known for his striking landscapes and coastal views that utilize Western techniques of perspective. The resulting sense of modernity marked a radical departure from tradition in the Japanese *Ukiyo-e* print.

The image depicts the different species captured in the early nineteenth century Japanese shore-whaling industry. The whales identified are (right to left): *Sebi-Kujira* (Right), *Zato-Kujira* (Humpback), *Akabo* (Whale with reddish skin), *Iwashi-Kujira* (Sei), *Nagasu-Kujira* (Blue). Hirado is a hilly island north of the Goto archipelago off the west coast of Kyushu, Japan.

Francis B. Lothrop Collection
Peabody Essex Museum
Photo by Mark Sexton

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BRITON C. BUSCH



Editor-in-Chief's Note

The preservation of heritage ships is a passionate subject for those devoted to the task of keeping a special vessel. The *Vasa* and *Victory* are but two of the great treasures of marine heritage. In the United States, the number of vessels preserved for the future is considerable, and their types range from schooners to battleships, and many others besides.

Among criteria necessary for evaluating whether or not a vessel ought to be preserved, and thus an obligation for others to fund and support in the future, is uniqueness of the vessel. This is one criterion; another may be the historic significance of the vessel, by which we mean the distinction the ship has experienced in the past.

Often, vessels are saved by a *BOGSAT* — a Bunch of Guys Sitting Around a Table. Enthusiasm grows with nostalgia, and a cry comes up: "This ship must be saved!" It is from the decision of such inspired groups that political will begins, and from political will derives heritage policy.

The sole surviving Tribal Class destroyer world-wide is HMCS *Haida* — berthed at Toronto's splendid Ontario Place. Tyneside-built by Vickers-Armstrong and commissioned in early 1943, she, like HMS *Warspite*, seemed always in the action. This most decorated of Canadian men-of-war participated in D-Day, had numerous Channel and European triumphs, and served in the Korean War with distinction. Her peacetime roles were equally various and notable. Since 1964, she has been a naval memorial, museum, and site for Sea Cadet training. This growing tourist attraction is a superb introduc-

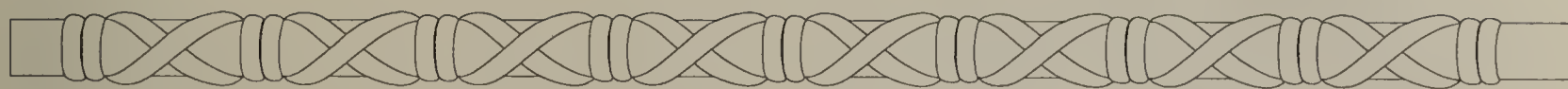
tion to Canadian naval history. She is the northern dominion's HMS *Victory*.

Recently, noted author and film writer Sir Ludovic Kennedy paid a call to the ship. He had served in *Tartar* — now, like every Tribal except for *Haida*, consigned to watery grave or scrap heap. His praise for those sensible enough to preserve the ship for future generations was well-directed, for the Friends of HMCS *Haida* are doing just that. When the Province of Ontario purchased *Haida* in 1971, on advice of a BOGSAT headed by John Robarts, sometime naval officer and provincial premier, they laid foundations for the shrine of Canadian naval history. Visitors to Toronto will want to put *Haida* on their list. Further information is available from Friends of HMCS *Haida*, 2 Bloor Street West, Suite 100, Box 405, Toronto, Ontario M4Z 3E2.

In this issue of *The American Neptune*, we feature Robert Allison's account of perils of a different sort — how the US Navy dealt with Barbary pirates, and vice versa. The naval-diplomatic techniques of yesteryear make interesting reading. This article continues our tradition of exploring aspects of early national naval and mercantile experience at this oceanic birthing-time of the American nation. As is customary, we also publish a wide range of articles on other topics, mindful as we are of the wonderful diversity of our readership.

BARRY GOUGH

Wilfrid Laurier University
Waterloo, Ontario



Sailing to Algiers: American Sailors Encounter the Muslim World

ROBERT J. ALLISON

Isaac Stephens was beset by troubles. Captain of the Boston schooner *Maria*, Stephens and his five-man crew were captured off Portugal's southern coast by an Algerian cruiser on 25 July 1785. Taken to Algiers, the seamen were put to work in the Dey's garden. Stephens, along with two other captured American captains, Richard O'Brien and Zachariah Coffin, was taken to the home of Charles Logie, the British consul. Perhaps they expected him to protect them as fellow English-speaking Christians. The three captains were surprised and humiliated when Logie put them to work in *his* garden, and mocked their country's pretensions to "independence" by having them serve at his table when he entertained English sea captains.

Captives in Algiers, Stephens and the others were victims of complicated international politics. British consul Logie had told the Algerians that the Americans no longer were protected by the British flag, and in the summer of 1785 had urged Algiers to declare war on the US. Along with the *Maria*, the Algerians captured the American merchant ship *Dauphin*, with her fifteen crewmen. Having taken the two ships, Algiers awaited American negotiations to ransom the crews and make a treaty. England was able to keep the cost of peace high in Algiers, while American diplomats in Paris and London tried to resolve the situation.

Thomas Jefferson, then minister to France, had been hearing rumors of Algerian hostility

since early in 1785. He had dismissed them as British attempts to drive up insurance rates and force merchants to use English, and not American, ships. Jefferson discounted the reports of Algerian attacks he read in English newspapers, which eagerly invented false captures, alleging that Algiers had even captured Benjamin Franklin, Jefferson's predecessor in Paris, and taken him into captivity.¹ Jefferson did not believe these rumors, but knew they were effective in forcing Americans out of the Mediterranean.

When Jefferson learned that some of the rumors were true, he set to work. With American naval hero John Paul Jones, and French aristocrat Marquis de Lafayette, Jefferson tried to enlist other neutral countries (Naples, Portugal, Russia, and the US) to fight Algiers, or at least to set up a blockade. Jefferson hoped to "secure peace thro' the medium of war." He planned to assemble an international military force to subdue Algiers, and, more importantly, to show England and France that the neutral nations would not let them dominate the world. This bold plan ended abruptly, when the French foreign minister told Lafayette that France would not allow this neutral force to be organized in France. The US would have to find other ways of resolving its problems with Algiers.²

This would be difficult. The US did not have the resources to pay tribute to Algiers, or to the other Barbary states (Tunis and Tripoli; Morocco had recognized the US in 1778, and the two



Christians in Slavery.

Though most captives were sailors, this image of Christian slavery persisted. This engraving is from a book celebrating England's 1815 attack on Algiers, after which Algiers renounced the taking of captives. From George A. Jackson, *Algiers* (London: 1817). Courtesy of Harvard College Library.

nations signed a treaty in 1786). If the US appeared anxious to redeem its captive citizens, Jefferson feared that Algiers would capture more. War was out of the question, as the US did not have a navy or any way of building one.

Meanwhile, Algiers was not alone in trying to extort something from the Americans. A man calling himself Thomas Smith wrote to Jefferson, and then paid a visit to the minister. Smith could barely speak English, but told the American minister he was from "Chastown," that he had been on an American ship, and had been captured by the Algerians. He had paid his own ransom. Now, if Jefferson was going to pay Algiers the ransom demanded for the other Americans, Smith believed he, too, should be compensated. Jefferson had a list of American captives, and Smith's name was not on it. Smith said he had been on a different ship, though he could not remember its name. Jefferson, with a keen ear

for language, asked him about his heavy accent. Smith said he was born in Canada of French parents. But, Jefferson said, Smith was not a French name. No, it wasn't, Smith replied. He was actually of German ancestry. Smith, the French-German-Canadian-American, showed Jefferson his passport, which was in the same writing as Smith's letter to Jefferson. Jefferson had heard enough, and sent Smith away.

In Virginia, George Washington heard of another adventurer, James. J. Reynolds, who wrote to the families of men lost at sea. Their lost kin, he told them, were actually captives in Algiers. For a price, he could help redeem them. Washington, in touch with both US diplomats in Europe and merchant communities in Madeira, put a stop to Reynolds' "impositions," but like Jefferson, he recognized that the US was too weak to prevent such impositions.³

Isaac Stephens, a real captive, had nearly as

much trouble convincing his countrymen of his plight. He urged John Adams, US minister to London and a fellow townsman from Braintree, Massachusetts, to use his influence with the US government to secure release of the two dozen American captives. Even better, Stephens thought Adams could redeem the prisoners on his own initiative, but Adams, like Jefferson, feared that showing too great an interest in the captives would drive up the cost of redemption. Even worse, it might tempt Algiers, Tunis, or Tripoli to capture more American ships. Neither Adams nor Jefferson would go beyond their public position and act as an individual. Stephens drew a compelling picture of life for the captives in a letter to Adams, which Adams repeated for Jefferson:

*The People i.e. the Sailors as I suppose, are carrying Rocks and Timber on their backs for nine miles out of the Country, over Sharp Rocks and Mountains, that he has an Iron around his Leg, etc.*⁴

Adams cut Stephens' description short. The "etc." conveys much that Adams did not have to say. Stephens described a real situation, but Adams found it unnecessary to repeat the description because the plight of Christian captives in Algiers was a well-known staple of European and American thought. The threat of Algerian captivity thus would be a significant check on US trade, because Americans, like Europeans, understood what Algerian captivity would mean. Although the plight of Stephens and the other captives owed much to the complicated politics of Europe, Americans for the most part would see their suffering as evidence of the avarice of people called "Barbary pirates."⁵

The image of Barbary pirates had been fixed for centuries in the popular imagination. Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli — outposts of the Ottoman Empire — had formed the front line in the battle between Islam and Christian Europe. European Christians had carried the battle back into Africa: Spain held the Algerian city of Oran (1509–1791) and Portugal maintained its "holy war" against the Muslims until the twentieth century. Captives on either side would be put to work on

war galleys, or would be redeemed when the wars ended. When Christians of Spain and the Italian states defeated the Muslim fleet at Lepanto (1571), the nature of the conflict changed. The great struggle between Christianity and Islam changed into a series of small wars or raids by Christian and Muslim states against one another. Coastal towns in Sicily or mainland Italy and Spain were most threatened by Tunis, Algiers, or Tripoli.

Northern Europe, not so exposed, encouraged the Algerians, Tunisians, and Tripolitans to attack their rivals. By the end of the eighteenth century, the system of alliances had become more formalized, with Britain, France, and Holland competing to bribe the Barbary states to attack their rivals. An adage repeated in London, Paris, and Amsterdam attributed to the British court, Louis XIV, or Dutch merchants, said: "If there were no Algiers, it would be worth our while to build one." Algiers functioned for Europe as a check on other European commercial activity. The leaders of Algiers had their own motives for commercial raiding, the most important one being that it paid well. Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli also had active merchant communities with trade networks all across the Mediterranean. The commercial raids were not random attacks, but calculated, often at the behest of Europeans.

American captives in Algiers came to understand the complexity of Algerian society, and learned that their own misfortunes resulted not from the depravity of Algiers but from the power politics of Europe. Richard O'Brien, who emerged from twelve years of captivity (1785–1797) to become American consul general in Algiers (1798–1801) had a clear sense of the relationship between Algiers and international law. The Dey of Algiers had observed to O'Brien that "The large fish eats the little one," and O'Brien noted that "The great nations make laws to serve them." Algiers, he said, "has nothing to do with Blackstone or Vattel, but worse has the French and British done...then the people that is stiled pirates in Barbary."⁶

Were the Barbary pirates really pirates?



BURNING of the PRIVATE PHILADELPHIA in the HARBOR of TRIPOLI, on the night of 16 Feb. 1804, Lieutenant Stephen Decatur commanding the vessel.

On the night of 16 February 1804, Lieutenant Stephen Decatur and a small crew stole into Tripoli harbor, boarded the frigate *Philadelphia*, and set her afire. British Admiral Horatio, Lord Nelson called this the boldest naval act of the age, and President Jefferson immediately promoted Decatur, an instant national hero, to captain. Courtesy of the Beverly R. Robinson Collection, US Naval Academy.

Pirates by definition operated beyond the authority of a state, and were the enemies of all nations. The Barbary pirates, on the other hand, were sanctioned by their governments and only attacked merchants from countries with whom their government was at war. The *Maria* and *Dauphin* had both been taken after Algiers declared war on the US. The Barbary states practiced extortion in capturing ships in order to extract ransom and tribute from other nations, but it was not, in the strictest sense, piracy. In the 1790s, the British and French also captured American merchant ships; in fact, they captured many more than the Barbary states did. By referring to Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli as Barbary pirates, we obscure the real story of interna-

tional politics, conjuring up images of men with eye patches and sabers, talking of pieces of eight.⁷

Contemporaries confused the issue by referring to the Algerians as Barbary pirates. Confusion resulted, too, from the way Americans wrote of the captives. Adams cut short Stephens' description, thinking it a romantic embellishment. Adams knew that the fictional image had been accurate three centuries earlier, but was no longer. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1574–1616) had been captured at the battle of Lepanto in 1575, and for five years rowed as a galley slave in Algiers, while he waited for his family to ransom him. Three chapters of his novel, *Don Quixote de la Mancha* tell the story of his captiv-

ity in Algiers. Cervantes was only one, though the most important one, of many European writers who used this theme. Thomas Jefferson, in fact, learned Spanish during his 1783 voyage by reading *Don Quixote*. The novel's long resonance is a testimony to its author's art, and consistent with the novels' theme of romantic imagination blending fact and fiction into memory.⁸

By the eighteenth century, galleys were obsolete, and Algiers did not use them. However, the imagery persisted. In January 1795, some New Englanders, eager to help the American hostages, published a petition on their behalf, signing Richard O'Brien's name

to give an authentic aura. O'Brien, in this petition, lamented that he and the other captives were "chained to the gallies of the imposter Mahomet." It is impossible that O'Brien wrote this petition — published in the US three weeks after President Washington's proclamation of 1 January — but even more telling is the reference to "gallies" and "the imposter Mahomet." O'Brien was a Yankee sea captain, accustomed to bargaining on the docks and running a ship. His writings from Algiers, many of which appeared in the American newspaper, were direct, vivid, and to the point. O'Brien was a thoroughly practical and realistic man, not interested in the religious question of Mohammed's "imposture," as a New England clergyman would have been.



On 3 August 1804, after a day of fighting in Tripoli's harbor, Captain Stephen Decatur and the fleet returned to their station, where Decatur learned his brother, James, commander of an American gunboat, had been killed by a Tripolitan captain who had not followed the rules of war. The Tripolitans had raised the flag of truce, and when Lieutenant James Decatur boarded their ship to accept their surrender, the crew murdered him. Stephen Decatur heard this news and returned to the harbor to find his brother's killer. *Decatur Boarding the Tripolitan Gunboat*, oil painting by Dennis Malone Carter. Courtesy of the Naval Historical Foundation.

O'Brien became the leader and spokesman for the American captives in Algiers, and he knew they were not chained to galleys.⁹

Still, Americans wrote of the Algerian captives as though they were galley slaves, and as though they were part of the continuing struggle between Islam and Christianity. One poet wrote of one suffering American captive who "expires at the oar." The poet, and others who wrote of American captivity, used imagery which no longer described the situation. The imagery of galley slaves put the experience into the historical context of Christianity versus Islam. In this way, the experiences of the American captives could bear meaning, and not simply be the story of people who fell on hard times.

Some captives, through their own efforts, could tell their stories honestly and convey this message, as Daniel Saunders did. Saunders, a sailor from Newburyport, Massachusetts, suffered a shipwreck on the Arabian coast in 1792. He survived to return home and publish his journal. A reader responded to Saunders' book with a testimonial in two newspapers:

*How bitter is suffering, but how noble is
generous courage, and ready invention.
How soon is woe in sympathy. This
rough path leads to our sublime pleasure.*

The encounter with Algiers and Tripoli formed the rough path, and on it, American captives would lead the new nation to its sublime pleasures.¹⁰

Susannah Rowson, actress and playwright, had a good sense of this in 1795 when she adapted Cervantes' play *Il Cautivo* (based on his experiences in Algiers) into *Slaves of Algiers; or a Struggle for Freedom*. Rowson's play would be performed often in the next dozen years, sometimes in benefits to raise money for the American captives. Among Rowson's captives were an American mother and son, and an English officer and his daughter. These four, it turns out, were a family which had been divided by the Revolution

(a theme Rowson used somewhat differently in her best-selling novel *Charlotte Temple*). The family is reunited at the end of the play, and the American woman has taught the Dey of Algiers to behave as a civilized and enlightened ruler, treating his people as "citizens" rather than "subjects."¹¹

Susannah Rowson used a fictional Algiers, a staple of European thought, but she added a new ending to an old story. The Americans in Rowson's drama taught the Algerians how to behave as civilized and enlightened men and women. Rowson's fictional ending to the saga of the American captives played well on the stage.

The conclusion to the real story of Stephens, O'Brien, and the other captives was more complicated and more prosaic. When Algiers seized eleven more US ships in 1793, again at the secret urging of the British, the US began to build a navy. In 1795, the US negotiated peace treaties with both the British and the Dey of Algiers. Algiers was promised \$800,000 and a substantial annual tribute in naval supplies. In addition, the US built a frigate, the *Crescent*, as a special gift for the Dey. The hostages were freed, and the lesson taught the Algerians was not conveyed on the American stage. By this time, the US had other problems, notably with the French government. The frigates, begun in 1793 to fight Algiers, had their first action in the war against France.¹²

Rowson's fictional ending proved more satisfying, and memorable to Americans than the historical one. The conflict with Algiers ended with a negotiated settlement. In 1801, the US and Tripoli went to war. Tripoli declared war on the US, hoping to exact more respect and tribute from the new nation, but now Thomas Jefferson was president, and he was more determined than he had been in 1785 to demonstrate to the powers of Europe that neutral nations, and particularly the Americans, would not play by the old rules of power politics. Jefferson sent four ships to the Mediterranean and cooperated with Sweden in setting up a blockade in Tripoli. After four years of fighting, the US and Tripoli negotiated a settlement. As



Blowing Up of the Frigate SHIP INTREPID commanded by CAPT. SOMERS in the HARBOUR of TRIPOLI on the night of the 1st Sept 1804

Before the Intrepid had gained her destined situation, she was suddenly boarded by six Tripolines, when the Gallant SOMERS and HERREY of his Party, Lieut. Wadsworth and Land, and at last observed themselves surrounded by 5 gun boats, and in prospect of Escape, determined at once to prefer Death and the Destruction of the Enemy to captivity & a torturing Slavery, put a Match to train leading directly to the Magazine, which at once blew the whole into the Air.

In an attempt to blow up the Pacha's palace, the gunboat *Intrepid* was made into a floating bomb. On 1 September 1804, manned by a small crew led by Lieutenant Richard Somers, she was quietly towed into Tripoli's harbor. No one is certain what happened. Sparks may have accidentally set off the explosives, or the Tripolitans may have discovered the plot and fired at the boat, or, in the story told by Americans at the time, Somers and his men learned they had been discovered, and rather than risk capture, set the fuse themselves. Courtesy of the US Naval Academy.

with the Algerian resolution, the fact of a peaceful settlement was overshadowed by popular fictional accounts of a decisive American victory. The US Navy had significant victories which were embellished and elaborated by plays, poetry, songs, and paintings.

On 1 August 1801, the US schooner *Enterprise* encountered a Tripolitan ship, the *Tripolitan*. The ships were evenly matched, each with about ninety men on board. After a day of fierce fighting, half the Tripolitans were dead, and their ship all but destroyed. Not a single American died in the battle. This victory was more than vindication for Jefferson, who told Congress:

"The bravery exhibited by our citizens on that element will, I trust, be a testimony to the world that it is not the want of that virtue that makes us seek their peace, but a conscientious desire to direct the energies of our nation to the multiplication of the human race, and not to its destruction."¹³

Not long after the *Enterprise*'s victory, an American playwright created a fictional rendition of the event. *The Tripolitan Prize, or, American Tars on an English Shore* took liberties with the facts as well as with geography and probab-

ity. The play took place off the coast of England, where a storm had driven the American and Tripolitan ships. Thus, an "English" crowd on the stage witnessed the American victory, and the New York audience saw both the victory, and the British reaction to it. No copies of the play survive, although plays with similar themes — the US victory over Tripoli — would be performed well into the 1840s. This particular play only survives in a scathing review written by Washington Irving.

Irving did not much care for the Jefferson administration, and he was even less enthusiastic about the democratic tendencies of the American people. In his review, Irving lampooned the play and its heavy-handed message of American bravery. He complained that the whole drama was "taken up hallooing and huzzaing between the captain, his crew, and the gallery..." The audience was crucial to the play, and if Irving hated the show, the gallery mob loved it. One plot twist involved the American captain's son, who briefly considered leaving the Navy to marry his English sweetheart. Neither the captain nor the audience would allow this — the captain bellowed, "What! an American Tar desert his duty!" The audience shouted, "Impossible! American tars forever! True blue will never stain!"¹⁴

Jefferson and the anonymous playwright both made clear that the Tripolitan war was about more than protecting American commerce. *The Mussulmen Humbled*, an epic poem published in 1805, declared that "on this side of the Atlantic, dwells a race of beings of equal spirit to the first of nations." The poem was advertised as "a work... founded on the matchless basis of truth" to "promote the love of freedom by an elucidation of the superior advantages that result from it." Not only American poets and statesmen, but even Pacha Yusuf Qaramanli came to respect the virtues of the Americans, as exemplified by their sailors. As he watched the American fleet tack into Tripoli's harbor in August 1805, the Pacha had reportedly predicted that "they will mark their distance for tacking; they are a sort of jews, who have no notion of fight-

ing." He changed his mind, according to the same account, when he had to take refuge in his bomb shelter. Wounded Tripolitan prisoners, returned by the Americans two days later, told the Pacha that "the Americans in battle were fiercer than lions, but in the treatment of their prisoners, they were even more kind than the Mussulmen."¹⁵

Jefferson had seen the encounter with Algiers in the 1780s as a chance for Americans to show Europe a proper standard of behavior. He was not satisfied with the negotiated settlement. The war with Tripoli, with its combination of negotiation and military force, provided a lesson more to his satisfaction. Other Americans also grappled with the conflict's meaning, and conflated the two encounters or applied the same imagery and narrative to explain each one. One of the most popular books published in the wake of the Tripolitan war was *The History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin, who was Six Years a Prisoner in Algiers*. According to the novel, told by "Mrs. Maria Martin," she had accompanied her sea captain husband on a voyage, which ended in a wreck on the Algerian coast. Henry Martin could not protect his wife. Maria was taken to the governor's palace and put to work in the kitchens. She attracted the Turkish governor's lustful attention, and when she refused to be his mistress, he locked her in a dungeon for a year. After her isolation, she had a revelation that if she continued to resist, she would be saved, spiritually and physically. She persisted and was saved, thanks to another English slave named Malcolm. Returning to England, she was reunited with her father after six years (he had thought her dead), then set off for Algiers to find her husband.

This remarkable book has all the features of a conversion narrative, with additional sexual tension. The reader identifies with Mrs. Martin and Malcolm, the English slave who helps rescue her, more than with her husband or the other, bitter women she meets in the governor's kitchen. Is it a true story? Did this really happen to Mrs. Martin? Probably not. The earlier American

edition claims that it was first published in England, but there is no evidence that it was. Would it be possible for Mrs. Martin to have been captured in 1799 or 1800, spent six years in Algiers, write a book about her experiences in England, then have an American edition appear in 1806? It would be possible, but phenomenal. The book itself had a phenomenal life. More than a dozen American editions appeared between 1806 and 1816, published in New England, New Jersey, Ohio, and Philadelphia.¹⁶

Maria Martin's novel borrowed liberally from a work of nonfiction, Matthew Carey's *Short Account of Algiers* (1793). This brief history remained in print for twenty years. It is not clear who wrote Carey's *Short Account*, although it may have been a translation of an earlier French history, with an additional chapter on the American captives. Carey ridiculed other travel writers who wrote of exotic lands from the comfort of their homes. Trying to fill a demand for the exotic, these writers embellished or invented the truth. Carey blasted these writers:

*The journalist records what he has seen happen once, or perhaps has never seen at all, as what takes place every day. The writer above referred to might as well have told us, that every native of Algiers was seven feet high.*¹⁷

Maria Martin's novel, pretending to be a true story, used excerpts from Carey's *Short Account* to strengthen its claim. Both Martin's and Carey's books were relatively short. One publisher decided to bind both together. Others followed. By 1815, the books were sufficiently confused that a Vermont publisher issued the *Short Account of Algiers* with Maria Martin as the author. Maria Martin's story was widely read, and still conveys a message of resistance to tyrannical authority supported by a reliance on divine providence. Not a new message, but one that Americans in 1807 had come to see as their own.

New England writer Royall Tyler also played

with the themes of captivity in his 1797 novel *The Algerian Captive*. Tyler claimed with tongue in cheek that his was a true story. Because he had access to better libraries and sources than the author of Martin's book (who seemed to have only Carey for support), Tyler's descriptions of Algiers are considered reliable, although of course he never went to Algiers; he wrote his entire novel in New England. Tyler, like other educated Americans, had read Don Quixote's account of Algiers, and his protagonist lamented that there were no Spanish nobles, knights of Malta, or Italian dukes among the other captives. The richest and most troubling irony for Tyler was not that free Americans were held as slaves, but that free Americans made slaves of others. His protagonist, Updike Underhill, had been captured by an Algerian cruiser while he was on a slave trading voyage to West Africa.¹⁸

Tyler had a more ambiguous message than others who wrote of the Algerian and Tripolitan conflicts. Others saw in the conflicts a vindication of American society and values, a triumph of American ingenuity or moral purpose. Tyler could not be so certain of American moral rectitude. One critic, in fact, took him to task for his seeming criticism of American morality. In one chapter, Tyler staged a debate between New England congregationalist Underhill and a learned Mullah. The Muslim cleric demonstrated the best arguments, telling Underhill that he was a Christian by chance, having been born in New England. Born in India, he would have been a Hindu, in China a Buddhist. The Mullah makes Islam so appealing, by contrast, the reader is tempted to embrace it. Tyler also criticized American slavery, foppishness, and ignorance.

It is small wonder, then, that Tyler's book went quickly out of print, while Maria Martin's and Susannah Rowson's remained popular throughout the period. Nor should it surprise us that in our more skeptical and critical age, Tyler's novel is again in print, while the celebratory works are forgotten.

While Jefferson and the anonymous author of the *Tripolitan Prize* were ready to predict victory in 1801, the war had not yet ended successfully. On 31 October 1803, disaster struck the American forces when the USS *Philadelphia* ran



Commander Edward Preble, leader of the American fleet, worked with the artist Michael Corne to produce an accurate rendering of the battle of Tripoli. Courtesy of the Maine Historical Society.

aground off Tripoli. More than three hundred American sailors and officers became prisoners, and the *Philadelphia*, damaged in her fight, was towed into Tripoli to be refitted for use against the Americans. In February 1804, Pacha Yusuf grew angry at reports that Americans were mistreating Tripolitan prisoners, and ordered the officers moved out of his palace and into the same lodgings as the sailors.

American newspapers in May 1804 carried two accounts of the move. A midshipman reported:

The prison has been formerly the Bashaw's Smoke House, and the most wretched looking place I believe they could find; however in the evening we were ordered back to our old prison, but a Palace to the Castle, in consequence of the French and Danish consul having interceded in our behalf.

Back in the palace prison, the midshipman reported, "Our chief support is sleep," retiring at

seven each night, awakened each morning, and reminded by "the iron bars around the windows" that "we are prisoners." This short, straightforward account tells us why the officers were moved, and where they went.

Other writers on captivity had reinvented and embellished their stories with elements of popular fiction; another prisoner could not resist doing this to the story of the move. In his version, as "the sun gilded our prison windows," the men were made to rise from their "flinty couches" and marched through the streets lined with mobs of "gaping people" drawn by "curiosity or the hope of plunder." The officers were led to a "black and dreary" dungeon "more fit to be the abode of demons, than of mortals." This place, "entirely black and dripping with unwholesome damps, and with vaulted ceiling hung with cobwebs," its broken floor crawling with vermin, was lit only by a small roof grate "which feebly glimmering served to make the darkness visible." As his eyes adjusted to the darkness, the officer thought of the River Styx separating the living from the dead, as well as of what he has



Algiers declared war on the US in 1815. President Madison sent Stephen Decatur and William Bainbridge, both celebrated veterans of the earlier encounter with Tripoli, to resolve the difficulties. Here the US fleet serenely rides at anchor in the harbor of Algiers, the once feared bastion of commercial raiders, now a peaceful and pacified port. After this mission, Algiers agreed not to seize American ships. Courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum.

“read of in the old romances.” The whole piece conveys a sense of Gothic horror and despair. In the best novelistic tradition, the hero escapes, and the reader is as relieved as he is. It seems an afterthought to this writer that the “abode of demons” was home to the American sailors.¹⁹

American experiences in this world were presented through the lens of fiction. As the story was retold, it became the stuff of myth and legend. Some writers intentionally embellished their stories. Others did not need to.

In February 1804, Stephen Decatur became the greatest American naval hero since John Paul Jones. Taking a small crew into Tripoli’s harbor, Decatur stole aboard the USS *Philadelphia*, surprised the force on board, and set the ship on fire before escaping. News of the events caused a sensation at home. Decatur was immediately promoted to captain. Horatio Lord Nelson, the greatest naval hero of the era, called Decatur’s

raid “the most bold and daring act of the age.” Nelson’s generous praise reflected again the staging of *The Tripolitan Prize*, with its English crowds watching the American naval victory. Decatur added to his own legend in August, after a day of fighting in Tripoli’s harbor. When he and the other naval heroes returned from Tripoli in 1805, they were feted and honored throughout the country. An American song promised that if any future despots insulted the flag, “We’ll send them Decatur to teach them ‘good manners.’”²⁰

Much of this story is now forgotten, or obscured beneath legends of Barbary pirates, but echoes persist. Towns are named for heroes (Decatur, Bainbridge, Somers), and the US Marines sing of going to the shores of Tripoli. In a more emphatic way, the American encounter with Algiers and Tripoli, which was made into legend even as it happened, resonates in American culture. Every American schoolchild learns

the story of Francis Scott Key, a Maryland lawyer who spent a night on board a British war ship as it bombarded Baltimore's Fort McHenry in 1814. Inspired by the "rockets red glare" and "bombs bursting in air," and awed when "dawn's early light" revealed that "our flag was still there," Key wrote a song, *The Star Spangled Banner*, celebrating the survival of a young nation. According to the official version, Key wrote out the first stanza on an envelope, then the next day, in the safety of a Baltimore tavern, he wrote three additional verses. His brother-in-law, whose family owned Key's manuscript and passed along the story, suggested a tune. In 1916, as military forces prepared to leave American soil for the second time since the war with Tripoli, President Woodrow Wilson ordered them to play Key's song. In 1931, it became the US national anthem.

Unfortunately, the legend is wrong. Key wrote the song and witnessed the bombardment in 1814, but nine years earlier he had written a strikingly similar song to the same tune, with the same imagery, and the same message. He wrote the *Star-Spangled Banner* after seeing the battle for Fort McHenry, but he had already described vividly a naval bombardment and battle in verse. In 1805, when Decatur and other heroes of the Tripolitan war returned to the US, Key wrote a song to be sung in their honor at a Georgetown dinner. To the popular tune *Anacreon in Heaven*, his tribute to Decatur celebrated the "band of... brothers" who pressed on through frowning desert and raging ocean to secure their country's honor and rights, and stained the waters with the blood of the infidels. The song, to the same tune he used later in the *Star-Spangled Banner*, contained the same kind of vivid naval imagery he would use in the later song, and also the same rhyme scheme — each verse closes with a couplet rhyming "wave" and "brave." In the later

song, he watched anxiously through the night to see if the flag was still flying. In the Tripolitan version, the flag itself was active: "each flaming star" was a gleaming "meteor of war" whose "terrible glare" made the turbaned heads bow, and the "light of the star spangled flag of our nation" obscured the Tripolitan crescent, which now beamed pale and lifeless.

Key's two songs, one commemorating a battle he witnessed, the other a battle he did not, both celebrate an American triumph. The heroes of Tripoli had accomplished what Jefferson had hoped they would. In defeating Tripoli, the Americans demonstrated both to Yusuf Qaramanli and the rulers of Algiers that they would not pay tribute. More importantly, the US showed England and France that Americans would not follow the standard corrupt modes of international conduct. Jefferson had sent the navy to the Mediterranean, not only to protect American commerce but to ensure the survival of national honor and identity.

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Ostend Whalers in Spitsbergen and the Davis Strait: The History of the Ostend Whaling Company, 1727–1734

JAN PARMENTIER

During much of the seventeenth century, merchants of the Southern Netherlands — now Belgium — showed no interest in whaling. In 1664, however, eight entrepreneurs from Bruges formed a partnership to send one or two flutes to Greenland every year. They called themselves the *Groenlandtsche Compagnie*. To augment the chances of success, the association asked the Rotterdam merchant Coster for assistance. With Coster's efforts, they were able to obtain experienced Dutch captains and harpooners, as well as the vessels, from Holland. The first expedition in 1665 showed a promising outcome; the two whalers brought home six small whales. The best catches of two ships were booked in 1669 with thirteen and eleven whales.

The Company continued its activities until 1675, but during the next year, four more Greenlandmen left the Port of Ostend and requested the Ostend convoy fleet to escort them as far as Dogger Bank to avoid French privateers.¹

The reason why whaling was rarely practiced in the Southern Netherlands during the seventeenth century, while the Dutch neighbors sent more than two hundred whalers annually to Spitsbergen, lies in the difficult political and economic circumstances during this period and in the lack of maritime development along the Flemish coast. The Southern Netherlands, also called the Spanish Netherlands at that time, were

situated amidst the seafaring nations of England, France, and the Dutch Republic. With its strategic position, it became the battlefield of Western Europe. The aggressive French policy to remove their borders up to the Rhine threatened the fragile equilibrium among the main European powers that was reached in 1648 with the Treaty of Munster. Under these conditions, shipping from the Southern Netherlands was restricted to coastal navigation and to the Iberian peninsula. The merchant fleet seldom counted more than thirty bottoms during the seventeenth century, and these ships were often mobilized for privateering during wartime. Blubber and whalebone arrived occasionally in Ostend. In August 1705, a Saint-Malo privateer captured the Sleswig whaler *Salvador Mundi* off Föhr Island. The Breton captain brought this prize to the port of Ostend; a few months later, her cargo of train oil and baleen was sold at public auction.² On the whole, merchant shipping was rare in this region, causing Flemish merchants to rely on foreign vessels for their overseas trade.

During the first decade of the eighteenth century, this situation changed for the benefit of enterprising businessmen in the Southern Netherlands. The death of Charles II of Spain in 1702 caused a new war when Louis XIV of France demanded Flanders and Brabant as part of his grandson's Spanish inheritance. The Spanish

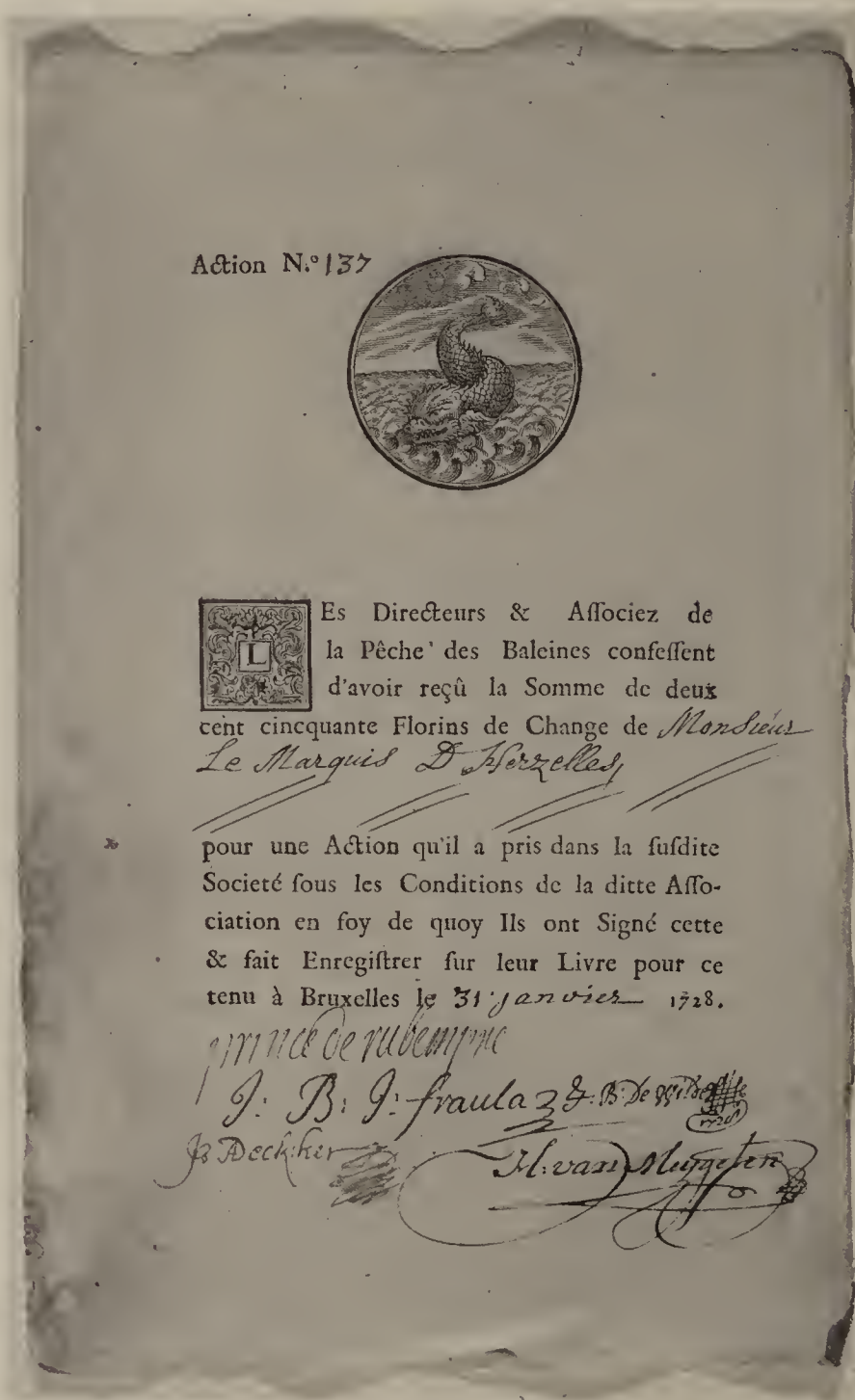
This East India traffic gave a positive boost to the regional economy, chiefly to Ostend. At that time, the Southern Netherlands, with a

coastline of only 67 km, counted two seaports — Nieuwpoort, which focused mainly on coast fishing, Iceland fishery, and Ostend. This second harbor expanded as the substitute for Antwerp, for since the Treaty of Munster, the Dutch super-

vised the Schelde River estuary and made free navigation impossible. Ostend was considered the sole harbor for merchant service during the eighteenth century. Thanks to the GIC, the infrastructure for seagoing ships improved enormously, and all kinds of shipping-related industries — such as new wharves, sail lofts, and ropewalks — were introduced. Even the population of Ostend — approximately 5000 inhabitants — increased by 20 percent.⁴

The success of the Ostend East India Company inspired Baron Adam-Joseph de Sotelet, a high ranking civil servant and a member of the lower gentry, to ask the government in Vienna for a charter to start a whaling company in 1727.⁵ With the brilliant results of the GIC as an example, he hoped he would not encounter

any difficulty in attracting investors. Moreover, there existed an international trend in this period to stimulate new initiatives in different maritime sectors. These enterprises became very popular,



Share of the Ostend Whaling Company, belonging to Marquis Guillaume François de Herzelles, one of the directors, 31 January 1728. Courtesy of Algemeen Rijksarchief, Brussels.

especially in the Dutch Republic and England, but quite often were not well structured. They were set up solely to realize great profits in a short time for the organizers, while most of the small financiers were swindled. These practices were called *Windhandel* in Holland.⁶ London merchants also had to cope with a financial setback in 1720 due to the overestimation of the shares of the South Sea Company.⁷

In this atmosphere — with a certain dose of caution — Baron de Sotelet developed a carefully considered plan for a whaling company. He knew very well that it was a rather risky business, and positive results were far from guaranteed. He also kept in mind that there was a lack of knowhow in the Southern Netherlands. From the start, he asked Vienna for permission to engage foreigners as seafaring personnel.

To construct a solid financial base, Sotelet created a joint stock company. He first attracted several wealthy people from his own circle, high ranking civil servants and noblemen, to invest large sums in this enterprise. He promised these investors a voice in the Company's management. Actually, the eight major financiers who formed the Board of Directors, knew nothing about whaling. Just the prospect of receiving high dividends proved to be sufficient to snare them. In this manner, Sotelet successfully gathered 138,000 guilders in capital in a few weeks time.⁸

At the first general board meeting of 6 September 1727, the initial eight participants agreed that the Company would exist for a period of at least fifteen years, or as long as their mutual association would last. They chose Brussels as the seat and decided that every participant had one vote. Sotelet got the decisive vote to avoid a possible deadlock. Upon arrival of one of the whalers in Ostend, the Board would assemble. Jan-Baptist Jozef de Fraula was named Chairman. He seemed to be the most influential person of the Company. Fraula, like Sotelet, was a high ranking civil servant, who had negotiated several international conferences on the economic future of the Southern Netherlands. He was also an important participant of the GIC with thirty-nine shares, and was the best choice to make the whaling company more respectable and trustworthy. De Fraula maintained excellent contacts

with the *beau monde* of Antwerp, which still was the financial heart of the Southern Netherlands.

In contrast with several other whaling and fishing companies abroad, the Directors decided that their fleet could be used only for whaling, not for coastal navigation in winter. This carrying trade made the whaling business more lucrative when the ships encountered a bad season near Spitsbergen and the Davis Strait.⁹ The Nieuwpoort *Compagnie van Vischvaeert* used such a system, and gained greater profit with freight traffic than cod fishery.

From the start, the Directors intended to send six vessels to Greenland and Spitsbergen or to Davis Strait and Hudson Bay. They would decide if it was necessary to enlarge the fleet and to attract more funds after the first whalers returned home. To cover the costs of the next voyages, the Company would go public. It would be possible for potential subscribers to buy newly issued shares at the stock exchange of Antwerp.

The Board appointed one of the directors, Hendrik Van Meygelen, as administrative bookkeeper. A local merchant from Brussels, Van Meygelen received the handsome annuity of 18,000 guilders for his new duties, an amount which also included his traveling expenses between Brussels and Ostend on behalf of the Company. The Directors engaged Jan de Schonamille as Company agent in Ostend to organize the maritime side of the expeditions and the public auctions of oil and baleen. His commission was 1¼% of the global outfitting expenses. De Schonamille had won his spurs during the Spanish Succession War as Master Attendant of the convoy fleet, which sailed every year to Cádiz. These convoy ships were heavily armed; they also functioned as privateers.¹⁰ In 1719, Jan de Schonamille started a part ownership for trading with West Africa in association with a few merchants from Zeeland. He showed no interest in the slave trade, preferring to trade textiles and ammunition for gold, ivory, and malaguet pepper at the Coast of Guinea. Unfortunately, this initiative was crippled by the Dutch West India Company, who considered them



Dutch flutes hunting whales in the packed ice near Spitsbergen. Painted by Abraham Stork (1635–1710), ca. 1680. Courtesy of Maritiem Museum Prins Hendrik, Rotterdam.

interlopers and subsequently confiscated two of de Schonamille's Guineamen. In 1725, de Schonamille proved his qualities as a diplomat. He traveled to Algiers on an imperial mission to negotiate the ransom of the crew of the Ostend Mochaman *St. Elisabeth*. In 1724, Barbary pirates had captured this East India ship near the coast of Brittany. In 1727, the unfortunate seamen finally were released.

None of the Directors considered this whaling company as their major source of income. Besides de Sotelet and de Fraula, two of the other financiers, Philippe François, Prince of Rubempré, and Ambrosius, Marquis of Herzelles, belonged to the circle of important national civil servants. The Prince of Rubempré was also an investor in other fishery concerns,

such as the *Compagnie van Vischvaert*.¹¹ Another director was Guillaume Philippe de Herzelles, the brother of Ambrosius. He became abbot of the Saint-Gertrude Abbey near Louvain in 1721. He, too, invested some capital in the GIC. In 1742, he was appointed as bishop of Antwerp. The last two major participants Jean-Baptiste-Aurèle à Walhors and Jean-Baptiste De Wilde, were members of the Brussels city council.¹² Only bookkeeper Henry Van Meygelen had some commercial experience. This meant that he, together with the Ostend agent, would play a crucial role in the management of the Company. The other Directors were important only in raising necessary additional funds.

Several months before the Austrian government granted the charter, Baron de Sotelet con-

tacted Amsterdam merchant Arnold Joseph Du Bois to look for suitable whaling vessels. It was no surprise that Sotelet chose to go abroad for ordering these ships, because the traditional flutes and boatships were seldom constructed in the small yards of Ostend and Bruges. To control costs, Sotelet advised his Dutch agent to buy secondhand ships. On 30 November 1726, Du Bois purchased from Westzaandam shipwright Cornelis Dirksz Ouwejan three flutes named *Maria Catharina* (435 tons), *Jonge Hildegonda* (445 tons), and *Nieuwe Hoop* (338 tons). Ouwejan received 29,750 guilders for these three whalers.¹³

The region north of Amsterdam was renowned for its whaling activities, so it seemed logical that Du Bois bought the vessels in Zaandam, a town which functioned as a center of the Dutch shipbuilding. To cope with the competition from Amsterdam, the Zaandam carpenters erected a big *overtoom*, a means to carry vessels across a dyke. With this remarkable hydraulic construction, the Zaandam wharfs could transport large ships to open water, thus enabling them to answer the demand for ships with more capacity.¹⁴ It is very likely that the flutes bought by Sotelet and his friends were built in these yards.

Du Bois showed particular interests in buying flutes, for this type of ship was very popular with Dutch whalers after the seventeenth century. The distinguishing mark of this three-masted merchantman was the high, pear shaped stern. With its rounded hull, the flute was highly suitable for bulk transportation. Initially, the deck was narrow, but by the end of the seventeenth century — for the benefit of the whaling fishery — the upper deck was enlarged, thus improving labor space. The flutes painted by Abraham Storck (circa 1690) are accurate reproductions of vessels purchased by the Ostend Whaling Company. These solid ships could easily stay in service for thirty to forty years.

In December 1726, Du Bois managed to buy the frigate *Sint Joseph* (374 tons) from the Amsterdam merchant Adriaan Wittert for 8,600 guilders. The Ostend fleet was completed with

another flute in February 1727. Du Bois spent 8,500 guilders to attract the *Perel* (435 tons).¹⁵ A sixth ship, as initially stipulated at the first board meeting, was never bought. The Directors of the Company gave no explanation for this change of policy, but it is likely that the lack of funds and the fact that Sotelet already had spent much of the starting capital contributed to the decision.

Measurements of the Ostend flutes, which applied only to length, width, and depth, conformed largely with standard dimensions of Dutch whalers launched in the decades before 1700.¹⁶ These vessels were no longer than 31 meters (109 Amsterdam feet). The width or breadth, which was measured on the outside beam, *i.e.*, “inside the skin,” was on average one quarter of the length, and the depth never exceeded twelve feet.¹⁷

The size of Dutch whalers increased during the first half of the eighteenth century. The two vessels (also built in Zaandam) commissioned by the Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie (MCC) in 1734 to sail to Davis Strait measured 115 and 112¼ Amsterdam feet.¹⁸ The flutes used by the Ostenders were perhaps older and smaller than most Dutch whalers put into service at the time.

At the beginning of March 1727, four of the five Dutch ships arrived in the port of Ostend — the frigate *St. Joseph* left for San Sebastian. Like the first Dutch and English whaling expeditions, the Ostenders asked experienced Basques to teach them the techniques — a peculiar decision, as the Basques seemed to have disappeared from the international whaling scene by that time. Although hardly anything is known about Basque activities near Spitsbergen and Davis Strait in the eighteenth century, William Scoresby mentioned a list for 1721 with twenty Basque whalers on it. Other evidence of Biscayan hunters during this period is rather fragmentary. Lubbock asserted that there were at least twenty Basque ships present near Greenland in the years 1721–1736. The whaling activities of the Basques were modest compared to those of the Dutch, but their excellent reputation inspired an opportunist like Sotelet to engage Martin De Zavaletta of San Sebastian as his agent. De Zavaletta's assignment was to prepare the *St. Joseph*



DE OVERTOOM TE WESTZAANDAM, in 1717.

The *Overtoom* in Westzaandam, 1717. The Ostend whalers were probably built on this wharf. Courtesy of The Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, MA.

for a voyage to Spitsbergen, and to muster a Basque crew, but this frigate had to sail under Flemish colors, and the produce of the expedition was to be sold in the Southern Netherlands.¹⁹

Jan de Schonamille's preparations in Ostend took about two months. The flutes' hulls were reinforced with double planking, and were fully nailed to cope with the extreme weather conditions in the Arctic. The bow of every vessel was sheathed with copper. This procedure was remarkable, for copper sheathing was not common before 1760. Several sources mention that the British Navy was the first to experiment with copper sheathing as late as 1761. The East India Company in Ostend provided its ships with copper plates from 1725 on.²⁰

After an inspection, several sloops were found in a bad condition, so three Ostend ship-

wrights were hired to construct fourteen new whaleboats. It was decided that every flute have on board five or six sloops. There are no representations of the actual vessels, but it can be assumed that the Ostend carpenters used the Zaandam whaleboats as models, and the work was checked and approved by three Dutch captains with a great deal of whaling experience. According to a study by J. Van Beylen, Dutch whale boats measured approximately twenty-five Amsterdam feet and were, as opposed to traditional fishing sloops, rather narrow. Furthermore, the keel was more conical to increase speed. The use of elm instead of oak to construct the inside of the whaleboats made them lighter.²¹

De Schonamille had to verify the quality of the lines. He preferred to order new ones instead of using the old Dutch lines, the manufacture of

which was entrusted to a few local ropemakers. The Ostend ropewalk made ninety-three lines, approximately twenty-three per ship, for this occasion. Other indispensable tools for the whale hunt were bought mainly in Bruges and Amsterdam. The inventory of the flute *Faem van Vlaenderen* mentioned forty-three harpoons, twenty-two walrus lances, and a large assortment of knives to transform the whales into blubber and baleens. Every ship was fitted with traditional cooking utensils in pewter or iron, and each received a big copper kettle to render the blubber. Special double sails were made of Bruges canvas, a town internationally known for the quality of its sailcloth. The rigging of the four ships was still in good shape; only minor repairs had to be undertaken.

Jan de Schonamille found it necessary to arm the flutes with ordnance and a wide variety of handguns, the number of which per ship was not specified. Better information is found in the Basque outfitting bill of the frigate *St. Joseph*, which could defend itself with six three-pounders, six flintlocks, six pistols, and eight broadswords.²² This seems to be an insufficient arsenal to make a bold stand against privateers.

The outward cargo of the whalers consisted mainly of empty casks to hold blubber. De Schonamille had to contact several merchants in Dunkirk, Rotterdam, Flushing, Ghent, and Bruges to buy more than 2,000 casks.

These outfittings had a positive impact on the local economy. Only very specific items (canvas, harpoons) or large amounts (casks) were ordered in the neighboring centers.

A similar procedure was followed in purchasing food supplies. Each ship stowed about 1,655 pounds of stockfish, 7.5 *razieren* young peas (1,875 pounds), 7,666 pounds of biscuits, 600 pounds of butter, and a large quantity of pork.²³ The provisions consisted further of groats, bread, oats, onions, sugar, garlic, vinegar, some spices, and a live pig. Beer, water, and Geneva (Holland gin) were the main beverages for the crew, while French and Rhine wine were served at the Captain's table. The sailors received three different kinds of cheese: *zoetemelks* (sweet milk) of Gouda, Edam and Cumin cheese, which originated from Leiden. This diet

was typical of Dutch whalers around 1630. A century later, four pounds of roasted coffee and some bottles of Canary wine for the officers would be added.²⁴

Jan de Schonamille spent 67,281 guilders to ready these four flutes. When the Basque outfitting of the *St. Joseph*, wages, and the purchase of the ships were taken into account, Van Meyghelen's bookkeeping records revealed the total investment for 1727 amounted to 168,789 guilders — exceeding the starting capital.²⁵ The continued existence of the Company relied heavily on the results of the first Spitsbergen expeditions.

Success of the voyages depended on the capability of the Dutch and Basque captains Sotelet and De Zavaletta engaged. Three of the flutes were commanded by skippers from the region of North Holland.

Jacob Hendriksz Stap, who became captain of the *Walvis*, sailed with the *St. Willebrordus* from Amsterdam to Greenland in 1725. He brought home one whale and sixty barrels of train oil.

The most experienced commander Sotelet engaged was Symoen Jansz Tel. In the annual published list for 1719 of Dutch, German, and Davis Strait voyages he was listed as master of the Amsterdam ship *Hoop*, bound that season to Davis Strait with one whale caught. A similar result was noted the next year. In 1721, Captain Tel moved to Zaandam and was hired by Jan Rogge to lead a new expedition to Davis Strait with the flute *Mercurius*. The poor output — Tel could not catch a fish — convinced the shipowner to dispatch the *Mercurius* to Spitsbergen in the coming season. This change was no surprise; in 1721, Dutch Spitsbergenmen realized profits with four whales caught on the average.²⁶ In 1722, Tel obtained 5½ whales and 180 barrels of oil, above the Dutch average of 4.6 whales. The success of the Dutch Spitsbergen voyages lasted only two years. Symoen Jansz Tel's voyages for Rogge with the *Mercurius* (1723) and the *Groene Viskorf* (1724) to the Greenland waters recorded no catches.²⁷

Information on the third Dutch captain,

Gerrit Henry van Geldrop, is scarce. Jan de Schonamille mentioned only that he was experienced in commanding a whaler. Geldrop signed a contract in Ostend as captain of the *Faem van Vlaenderen*.²⁸

To learn the art of whaling, Daniel Lindersen was chosen as master of the frigate *Perel*. His responsibility was limited, as he had to follow the instructions of his Dutch commanders during the voyage. The young Ostender was related to the successful privateer Joannes Lindersen, who captured more than thirty enemy vessels during the War of the Spanish Succession. Daniel Lindersen later moved to Zeeland and sailed in 1736 as master of the frigate *Stad Zierikzee* between Bilbao and Middelburg with a cargo of chestnuts for Bruges merchant Ferdinand Vanden Schrieck. He returned to Ostend in the 1740s, and played a significant role in 1744–45 as one of the few local captains who hunted French and Prussian merchantmen around the North Sea during the War of the Austrian Succession (1739–1748).²⁹

Other than the *St. Joseph*, which had a Basque crew, the vessels of the first expedition were manned with Dutch, Dunkirk, and Ostend mariners. Although exact information on the origin of the crews is lacking, highly qualified seamen, such as harpooners and blubber cutters, were recruited mainly in Holland. De Schonamille left the Dutch commanders a free hand in engaging capable fellow countrymen.³⁰ The presence of Dunkirk seamen on Ostend vessels is significant, for this port was not a whaling center.³¹

From the late seventeenth century on, Dunkirk and Ostend can be considered twin ports — hardly 40 km apart — with a large maritime community, members of which often had family ties on both sides of the border. A migration of able seamen occurred whenever the economy boomed in one port or the other.³² Ostend and Dunkirk merchants and shipowners regularly entered into partnerships.

The disappointing results of the first expeditions influenced the makeup of the crews for the second Ostend whaling fleet. Three vessels kept

the same commanders, but the backgrounds of the harpooners and blubber cutters shifted to Flemish and Dunkirk mariners.³³ Sotelet and his friends seemed convinced of the competencies of the Basque whalers. In 1728, they decided to equip two ships in San Sebastian. The flute *Faem van Vlaenderen* was renamed *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Bijstand*, a Christian name more appropriate to the Spanish tradition. This vessel was manned solely by Basque sailors hired by De Zavaletta, who engaged Joseph de la Varta of San Sebastian as new master.

The expedition was ordered to try whaling near Davis Strait that season, a change which proved to be a good option for the Basque-run ships, but not for the two whalers under the command of the Dutch captains.³⁴ The disastrous voyage of the *Vergulde Arent* could be attributed directly to Master Symoen Jansz Tel's inappropriate behavior. One of his harpooners, Jacobus Clarisse, made several complaints about Tel's conduct. His testimony, affirmed by most of the other crew members, sketched an interesting picture of the abuses on board and described vividly the contacts with the Inuits³⁵. Clarisse declared to the Company Directors that Captain Tel was drunk every two days, and under these conditions he was incapable of coming on deck. Arriving at Davis Strait, Tel robbed a few *wilden* (natives) of a small boat, which he brought with him to Ostend. Near Disco Island (West Greenland), the drunken captain ordered Daniel Stuyaert and François Lassé to throw one of the natives into the water. Luckily for this unfortunate man, he was rescued in time by another Inuit. Tel's bad behavior ruined the atmosphere and made it impossible to trade a dead whale, lying near the shore, with the Greenlanders. Shortly after this missed opportunity, the *Vergulde Arent* anchored at the Western Islands (Disco Bay), where Captain Tel threatened to open fire on the natives with a rifle. He also worked as harpooner on this voyage. In that capacity, he failed to kill a whale because he was too intoxicated, and dropped his harpoon into the water.³⁶ Another problem occurred in the navigation to and from Davis Strait; Jacobus Clarisse

stated that Tel was too blind to see that the ship was off course several times, in spite of the warnings voiced by Mate Laurens Hendrycxen Pulinck. To cover the nautical mistakes, Tel replaced a few pages of the original ship's journal. Due to the lengthening of the voyage, the *Vergulde Arent* ran out of supplies and had to call at the river Elbe (North Germany) to provision.

As a consequence of this bad experience, the Company decided to equip all the vessels of the third expedition (1729) in Basque Country. Martin De Zavaletta was prominent during the preparation phase. He engaged three new commanders: Benito De Arona for the *St. Pieter* (ex *Perel*), Antonio Sagarna for the *St. Michel* (ex *Vergulde Arent*), and Bartholomeo De Gorostiago for the *St. Joseph*. The fourth Basque captain, Joseph De la Varta, remained on the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Bijstand*, and the rest of the crew was predominantly Basque.

Operating again in Davis Strait, the Basque fleet, flying Flemish colors, registered the best results ever, which encouraged the Ostend Whaling Company to continue outfitting the ships in San Sebastian. In February 1730, unfortunately, the Spanish government, probably under pressure from the Dutch and the English, forbade the Ostenders to make further use of the Basque facilities. The main reason was Spanish efforts to start a whaling company. In 1728, the *Real Compania Mercantil de Ballenas* was founded, operating in San Sebastian. This enterprise, however, never succeeded in outfitting a whaler.³⁷ Nevertheless, in 1732 a new joint stock company, also based in Basque Country and supported by the Spanish Crown, was created with some marginal success in the years 1733–1737.³⁸

The Directors decided quickly, together with all the shareholders, to end operations. They thought it would not be profitable to continue whaling in Ostend, partly due to the lack of experienced local mariners.³⁹ The great dissatisfaction of the investors, who lost a great deal of money in this enterprise, and the desperate need for fresh capital to start new expeditions made

the Directors realize it was impossible for the Company to turn a profit.

The known crew size of the four whalers equipped in Ostend makes it possible to calculate the population density on board. Of the first expedition, we know the size of the crew of the four whalers equipped in Ostend. It gave us the opportunity to calculate the population density on board per 100 tons. The *Walvis* carried a crew of forty-one with a density of 9.4; the *Faem van Vlaanderen* carried a crew of forty-one with a density of 9.1; the *Vergulde Arent* carried a crew of thirty-six with a density of 10.6; and the *Perel* carried a crew of forty-one with a density of 9.4. Compared to the Ostend East Indiamen, the density of seamen on the whalers was much lower.⁴⁰ The voyages to Greenland and Spitsbergen were shorter, and the mortality rates seldom outnumbered the figures of the vessels bound for Asia. An added factor was that whalers did not need extra sailors to man the ordnance.

Information on mariners' wages paid by the Ostend Whaling Company is scarce, but it provides an interesting picture of the crew composition. A list made up by Martin De Zavaletta in March 1729 for Captain Joseph De la Varta shows monthly wages linked to the different functions on board the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Bijstand*. These salaries can be compared to the average Dutch wages for the same period.⁴¹

Martin de Zavaletta did not mention how many harpooners and spectioneers (blubber cutters) were contracted per ship. Taking into consideration that the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Bijstand* was equipped with six sloops, the Basque agent would have engaged six harpooners at the very most. Three to four harpooners on board seem more likely for two reasons: these specialists were highly paid, so one could hardly afford to enlist many of them, and the manning of the shallops was limited by crew size. If every sloop had to be manned with four rowers, a mate, and at least one harpooner, a maximum of four shallops could be brought into action at the same time. The number of spectioneers was limited to two or three men. They had to stand on the whale in the open sea, which was attached to the ship for flensing. This risky occupation was rewarded



Flensing a whale in open sea. The flute was anchored on a icefield to have some stability. Engraving in *Kort en Opregt Verhaal van het Droevig en avontuurlijk wedervaren van Abraham Janz. van Gelen...* (1683), A. de Blois. Courtesy of Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ghent.

with additional *visgeld* (fish money).

Compared to the Dutch, the Basque practice of paying monthly wages to the officers was rather uncommon. Normally, most officers sailed *voor hun part* (to receive a percentage of the catch). Under this system, commanders, harpooners, and spectioneers received their money in advance, called the “dead horse.” In addition, there were bonuses on every whale caught and on each *quardeel* (64 English gallons) of train oil brought home. Sometimes, a premium was distributed per baleen.⁴²

If the ship returned from Spitsbergen or Davis Strait clean (empty), the officers had to be

satisfied with only the dead horse for a whole season. The introduction of a fixed salary for everybody on board, as in San Sebastian, provided a secure income. The Dutch habit of paying bounties, which was also fashionable for the expeditions prepared in Ostend, was an opportunity for the officers to earn double or triple the income of their Basque counterparts.

It is uncertain if the prospect for better payment in Ostend was the formula to attract experienced Dutch masters and harpooners who started up the Flemish whaling industry, but other crew members, such as carpenters, coopers, and sailors, earned more on whalers than in

other branches of merchant shipping. Carpenters' salaries reached the level of those on the Ostend East Indiamen, but far surpassed the wages these craftsmen could expect to receive in the European traffic. Boatswains, stewards, and surgeons on the whalers also received exceptionally high earnings, as did the sailors. Under normal conditions, they signed up for twelve to fifteen guilders. Zorgdrager explained that occasional acute shortages of able seamen forced whaleboat owners to promise high wages, comparable to those of Ostend or San Sebastian.⁴³

Of the three campaigns organized by the Ostend Whaling Company, only the *Vergulde Arent's* journal for the first voyage to Spits-

bergen has survived. To reconstruct the routes of the Davis Strait whalers, use was made of the only known log of a Dutch whaler from this period bound for West Greenland, the Middelburg ship *Vergulde Walvis* (1735). Additional information on the navigation to the Arctic during the first decade of the eighteenth century was found in the journal of the Amsterdam flute *De Twee Goe Vrinden*, which sailed to the whaling grounds near Jan Mayen Island and Spitsbergen in 1715.⁴⁴

On 2 May 1727, the first four whalers left the Port of Ostend. Timing was crucial for such ventures to ensure a successful hunt. Leaving Flanders in May was already late, for most Dutch



Nieuwe afteekening van het Eyland Spits-Bergen..., Gerard van Keulen, ca. 1707–1714. The hunting grounds of the first Ostend expedition was situated in Northwest Spitsbergen. Courtesy of Maritiem Museum Prins Hendrik, Rotterdam.

Greenlandmen set sail around mid-April. The small fleet set a northeast course along the Dutch Coast. From the start, Captain Tel of the *Vergulde Arent* encountered serious problems in catching up with the other three flutes. The master complained of having to command a bad sailer, so the *Walvis* or the *Perel* took this ship under tow whenever possible.

A first landfall at Jan Mayen Island was made after eighteen days, from which all four vessels headed northwest. According to C. de Jong, these waters were frequented by *Noordkapers* (Northern Right whales), but the Ostenders did not spot any of these mammals. Weather conditions worsened quickly — snow and dense fog — and the first ice was noticed. The Ostend fleet tried to keep together, but ice floes made it too dangerous to drag the *Vergulde Arent* during the night. Soon afterwards, they had a friendly meeting with a buss from Altona (North Germany), carrying 120 barrels of seal oil. In the meantime, difficulties continued for Tel's vessel, which hit several floes. In an attempt to improve the steering of the *Vergulde Arent*, its rudder was replaced by two ordinary planks. This makeshift rudder improved the ship's sailing abilities.

Arriving at the latitude of 78°32' on 1 June, the Ostenders started the hunt. On the last pages of his log, Captain Tel calculated that they had covered 475 miles in thirty days to reach the packed ice, approximately the average duration of a Dutch outward voyage to Spitsbergen. The flutes were anchored on a small icefield near the open sea, with one or two sloops setting up a watch. These shallows were fully manned and equipped to react as soon as a whale appeared on the surface. This technique was repeated several days without seeing a "fish." Surprisingly, Master Tel spotted twelve whales in an eight hour period on 6 June, *maar konde niet vast raecken* (but they were not able to hit a whale). The *Vergulde Arent* spotted no whales the following week, perhaps because close attention was needed to avoid getting stuck in the ice. Finally, on 15 June, they caught sight of a whale. Three sloops came into action, but again these efforts were in vain. The lack of results was certainly not caused by the hunting methods the Ostenders used. Dutch and English narratives of

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries confirmed that the best places to outwit a Greenland whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) were related to the pack ice.

Trouble increased for the Ostend whalers with the loss of the *Walvis*. On 17 June, this vessel, caught in a blizzard, was punctured, probably after hitting several floes. The stern was shattered, and three shallows disappeared in the ice. The crew tried to save the ship by cutting the masts, but finally escaped in the nick of time with the three intact sloops. One group of *Walvis* seamen were picked up immediately by a Dutch whaler. After a search of two days, Captain van Geldrop of the *Faem van Vlaenderen* welcomed the crew of the second sloop on board. The others had to wait four days in miserable conditions before an English vessel rescued them. In the meantime, two sailors passed away and several men suffered frozen limbs which had to be amputated.

The other two Ostend whalers tried, during the second half of June, to reach the *Zeven Ijsbergen* (Seven Icebergs) on the Northwest coast of Spitsbergen because they ran out of drinking water. They moored on 29 June in the *Kruis Baey* (Cross Bay), where Master Tel heard the news of the *Walvis*. One sloop was sent southward to *Konings Baey* (King's Bay) to look for Captain van Geldrop's ship. The next day, thirty casks filled with sweet water, a lot of *salaade*(greens), and some fowl were stowed in the *Vergulde Arent*. The greens, better known as scurvy grass, formed an important part of the mariners' diet to prevent scurvy.⁴⁵

The two Ostend flutes sailed after one week in *Kruis Baey*, by request of Captain Lindersen, to a few small islands south of the *Voorland* (Foreland or Charles' Island) near the west coast of Spitsbergen, to gather bird eggs. Navigating southwards along the coast, they landed at the *Groene Herbergh* (Green Haven), where Tel found to his amazement four crew members of the wrecked *Walvis*. Two sloops were sent ashore to hunt *rheenen* (reindeer). This expedition also proved to be a failure, although that part of the island was famous for its reindeer herds.

The search for the *Faem van Vlaenderen* carried on, now more north near Magdalena Bay, until 21 July, when they found at last the third Ostend vessel. The crews missed an excellent opportunity in this region to take a bowhead of, according to Master Tel, 60 *quardelen* (13,980 liters of train oil).⁴⁶ The animal was trapped in the ice, close to the coast. The officers of the *Vergulde Arent*, on the other hand, gave priority to the safety of the ship and refused to raise anchor, arguing that the waters near the unfortunate whale were too shallow.

During the last days of July, the Ostenders began to prepare for the return voyage. In King's Bay, a large amount of stones were placed in the hold of the flutes as ballast. They decided to navigate northwards one more time to look for whales before sailing home. Every ship equipped two shallops to *Beschaeyer* (Biscayers Hook). Three times, this small company saw a "blow," but were not certain if they had spotted Greenland or fin whales. During the following week, two more attempts were undertaken with five sloops to capture a "fish," and on 5 August, three shallops tried to surround a *kasielot* (cachalot or sperm whale), which proved to be too fast.

After a month and a half of disappointing hunting, the Ostend fleet left Spitsbergen on 14 August. Again problems occurred with the rudder of the *Vergulde Arent*, making the return slower. At the latitude of 62°42', they made a landfall at the Faroes. Near these islands, van Geldrop and Lindersen decided, being one month under way, to go ahead, for food shortages were recorded. Master Tel was not happy at the prospect of being left alone. According to his journal, the victuals on board of his ship were also scarce: meat for one day only, butter for three days, and 3½ hogsheads of beer. For this reason, he changed course and tried to call at Stadlandet, in the middle of Norway, on 18 September. Bad weather kept the *Vergulde Arent* in open sea, and forced the Ostend flute to look further south for a safer anchorage. Navigation became more and more problematic. Hardly any progress was made during the following two weeks, while the

ship drifted westward until they saw the Shetlands.

A few days later, sailing southeast, Foula and Faire Isle came in sight. The officers' council advised Master Tel to change from the set route with the hope of provisioning in South Norway. On 20 October, the *Vergulde Arent* arrived in Flekkerøy. Captain Tel, accompanied by the chief carpenter, went to the nearby town of Kristiansand to buy supplies and to contact a blacksmith for making a new rudder. The repairs took longer than expected, so the Ostend flute was obliged to stay a fortnight in Flekkerøy.

The last stage of the return along Yarmouth to Flanders was completed in seven days. The *Vergulde Arent* entered the Port of Ostend on 12 November, but one of her companions, the *Perel*, had got stuck on a sandbank two weeks earlier, just before the dock area. The ship got afloat again the next day, but not without new damage. In the same period, the *St. Joseph*, with a Basque crew, also returned "on ballast" to Ostend.

The Directors of the Company reviewed the first expedition and wrongfully blamed Jan de Schonamille for the bad results. The Ostend commissioner resigned in December 1727 because he often had to pay Company debts from his own pocket. He mentioned that the Company's precarious financial situation was not good for his own reputation as a trustworthy entrepreneur. Sotelet engaged his brother-in-law, Balthazar Vignaulx, to replace him. Vignaulx, an experienced merchant and shipowner, was little acquainted with the maritime side of organizing whaling ventures. On the other hand, he was able to present remarkable credentials of his commercial activities, a quality which proved important for managing the auctions of oil and baleen in the future.

The year 1727 resulted in a deficit of 30,000 guilders above the initial capital. In contrast to English and Scottish whalers, the Ostenders were not subsidized by the government.⁴⁷ To continue its activities, the Company resolved to release 850 new shares of 250 guilders each. Every Director agreed to purchase twenty-four shares for his own account. This financial operation looked more like a fiasco, for one month later,

31 January 1728, only 536 shares were taken out, including those of the Directors. Only 134,000 guilders in new liquid capital was available for the preparation of the next voyages.⁴⁸

For the coming season, Spitsbergen was chosen over Davis Strait as a potentially more favorable hunting area. A second ship would be equipped in San Sebastian. Sufficient financial means for replacing the lost *Walvis* were lacking. A smaller fleet of four ships, two from Ostend and two Basque, sailed to West Greenland in March 1728. Only Jacobus Clarisse's testimony indicated the course. The chosen hunting ground was Disco Bay, which seemed similar to the Dutch catching area.

In August 1728, three of the four whalers returned to Ostend with the good news that the two Basque ships had caught four whales, among them sperm whales.⁴⁹ This was no surprise; the Basques had a long tradition in hunting *cachalots* and humpbacks.

The profits of the 1728 auction did not cover all the expenses of the expedition.⁵⁰ New funds had to be found to keep the Ostend Whaling Company alive. In January 1728, Chairman de Fraula was able to convince a number of prosperous Antwerp men to invest in this dubious enterprise. De Fraula predicted that the 1729

catches would yield 100,000 guilders at least, a promise that resulted in the sale of 495 shares (123,750 guilders) to about twenty-five new participants. The Antwerp financiers received de Fraula's assurance that he, personally, would make up the difference if the 1729 revenues were less.

The Ostenders implicitly trusted the skills of the Basque whalers during 1729. In September, the four Davis Strait men arrived in Ostend with 5 *poissons de grande baye vivant, et un mort outre deux plus petits*.⁵¹ It is probable Ostend whalers mainly caught humpbacks; the Greenland whale was called *baleine franche* in French during the eighteenth century.

In December 1729, Balthazar Vignaulyx noted that the entire proceeds of this venture amounted to 30,992 guilders — certainly not enough to pay dividends to the shareholders or to cover the equipment costs for the ships. These bad results initially did not stop the Directors from making plans for new expeditions. The stern

message from Spain to eliminate the Basque facilities, on the other hand, crippled all further aspirations. At the general meeting in Antwerp on 25 February 1730, it was decided that Martin de Zavaletta would try to sell the four flutes as soon as possible. The liquidation of all Company

VERCOOP-CONDITIEN

VAn d'onderstaende Goederen, die de Geïntereffeerde in de Viſſcherye van de Walviſch-Vangſt Publickelyck ſullen Veylen in de Venditie binnen de Stadt van OOSTENDE op den 29. December 1729. ende de volgende daghen, op de maniere als volgt; alles te betaelen in Vlaems Wiſſelgeldt.

I.
DEn Traen ſal connen geſien worden vier daghen voor den Vercoopdagh, ende den ſelven ſal Verkocht worden by den Stoop, Vlaemiſche ofte Gentſche Mate, maeckende de 95 ſloopen een Quartel van 12 ſtekan Amſterdamiſche Mate, ende dat volges de Ruſſinghe, gelyck dien Traen door de geſworen Pegelaers deſer Stadt van Ooſtende nu is gepegelt, ende die Ruſſinghe daer op geteeckent ſtaet.

II.
DE ſelve Gepegelde Vaten ſullen vier daghen naer de Vercoopinghe vol-gemaeckt worden naer gewoonte, ende alſdan bi ven ligghen ten peryckel, ende Ruſſico van den Cooper.

III.
DEn Breyn, zynde Sperma Cete, wordt Vercocht by het Oxhoofſt, in den ſelven ſtaet gelyck hy jegenwoordigh leydt.

IV.
DE Walviſch Baerden worden Vercocht by Ponden, weghende yderen Coop 400 ponden ghewiel van Ooſtende ſalvo juſto, maeckende 106 pondt van Ooſtende, in't Amſterdams gewicht 100 ponden, ſonder het een pondt ten hondert goetd gewicht der Waghe, t welck den Cooper ſal genieten buyten den tarra voor de Coorden ofte Banden; t welcke op den dagh van Venditie ſal gereguleert worden.

V.
DE bovenschreven Goederen worden Vercocht vry van Incommende ende uytgaende Rechten

VI.
DE Coopers ſullen verplicht ſijn hier hunnen Commiſſionaris te nomineren, den welcken het emport van hunne gekochte Goederen ſal moeten verantwoorden op heereijcke ende parate executie.

VII.
DE volle betalinge ſal moeten gheſchieden in Comptant ghelt, ofte goede Wiſſelbrieven binnen Bruſſel, in handen van d'Hr. HEND. VAN MEYGELEN tot ſijnen contentement, aler de ſelve Goederen ſullen worden ghelevert, den welcken aldan ſal geven ſijne Reſcipte, Waer op den Commiſſionaris tot Ooſtende de gekochte Coopmanſchappen ſal laeten volgen.

VIII.
MEn ſal aende Coopers ofte hunne Commiſſionariſſen, laeten rabatteren voor eerdere ofte prompter betalinghe als van dry Maenden, een half ten hondert par Maendt à rate van die ſomme, die ſy voor de dry Maenden ſullen hebben voldaan.

IX.
DE Coopers ofte hunne Commiſſionariſſen ſullen gehouden ſijn hunne gekochte Goederen te ontfanghen, ofte te doen ontfanghen tot Ooſtende ter plaetſe ghe-naemt de Schorre ende inde Stadt, in den ſtaet ſoo als die genombreert liggen, ſonder eenighe de minſte reſectie te connen pretenderen, op wat pretext het ſoude moghen welen, ende oock t'hunnen coſte ende peryckel te doen wegh-haelen

X.
ENde die hunne gekochte Goederen niet en connen ontfanghen binnen den tydt van twee Maenden naer de Vercoopinghe, ſoo ſal men die Goederen andermaal vercoopen op volle renchere, ende de courtreſſe ſal verhaelt worden op den Cooper ende ſijnen Commiſſionaris, ſonder te moeten obſerveren de Order, de excuſie, ofte de diviſie tot het volbrengghen, ende betaelen vanden prijs van het ghene den Coop compr te bedraghen, by prompte ende parate executie, ſonder voorgaende ſommatie

XI.
SOnder prejudicie ende dimunutie van de principale Coopſomme, ſullen de Coopers gehouden ſyn te betalen à rate van eenen Gulden par duſent van het Montant van hunne gekochte Goederen, ten profijte van den Armen deſer Stede.

Verkoopconditien (terms and conditions of sale) of the auction of the Whaling Company, held in Ostend on 29 December 1729. Courtesy of Algemeen Rijksarchief, Brussels.

assets would be necessary to pay off the huge unsettled debts.⁵²

The public sale of the last expedition took place on 29 December. Shortly after the arrival of the whalers, the blubber, baleen, and spermaceti were transported to the *Groote Kreek* in the Ostend dock area, where the Company had built a tryworks in 1727. After boiling the blubber and processing the baleens, everything was stored in a warehouse named the *Schorre*, which was especially constructed by the Company.⁵³

The auction was announced in the local newspapers a few weeks in advance, and posted on public places in the major Flemish towns. The next procedure was the official control by the sworn *pegelaars* (inspectors of weights and measures) of the City of Ostend, who calibrated all the casks of train oil. Four days before the actual sale, interested merchants were able to inspect the products. The oil and the spermaceti were sold per hogshead, and the whalebones per pound. In 1729, 325 hogsheads (74,265.75 liters) of train oil, and only eleven hogsheads of spermaceti were put on sale. Eleven merchants were interested in the 13,557 pounds of baleen. All buyers could get a discount of one half percent per month if they paid in full within three months after the auction. Merchants who failed to collect their goods in two months time lost their claim. These products were resold by the Company, but the first buyer had rights of usage. Finally, every purchaser had to hand over one promille of the price to the poor of Ostend.

The liquidation of the Ostend Whaling Company was finalized in May 1734. The last settling of accounts showed a deficit of 25,076 guilders.⁵⁴ Compared to other small companies abroad, such a loss was not abnormal, but this enterprise could not ask the government for financial assistance. De Fraula and his partners from Brussels had made a bargain in 1734 that all shareholders should contribute proportionally to cover debts. The Antwerp participants did not accept this proposal and went to court. The whole affair lasted until 1752, when the Antwerp financiers were absolved of paying any of the losses.

Sotelet's initiative hardly proved to be viable, because most of the participants — de

Fraula was the exception — wanted only to earn easy money. From the start, the lack of starting capital doomed the enterprise. Nevertheless very capable men such as Jan de Schonamille, Dutch and Basque commanders, and skilled harpooners were engaged in this effort. The changing economic climate and the problems of the Ostend East India Company paralyzed any future whaling ventures.

Flanders had to wait until 1771 before a whaler set sail again. Bruges merchant Nicolas Donche tried to revive this trade. His frigate *Maria en Alida* was able to catch 2½ whales during her second season near Greenland. When his third venture proved to be a failure, Donche did not want to spend any more capital in this enterprise.⁵⁵

The last whaling activities in Ostend happened during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1781–1783), when the neutrality of the Austrian Netherlands made whaling possible only for a few years. As soon as peace returned in Europe, Flemish participation ended.



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Tables

Size of the Ostend whalers (in Amsterdam feet)				
Name	Length	Width	Depth	Deck height
<i>Walvis</i>	109'	26'	11.8'	6.5'
<i>Faem van Vlaenderen</i>	106'	27'	12'	6.5'
<i>Vergulde Arent</i>	94.5'	24.5'	11.25'	5.5'
<i>Perel</i>	106.75'	26'	12'	6.2'
<i>St. Joseph</i>	95'	27'	11.25'	4.25'

Function	Monthly Wages in Ostend (<i>in guilders</i>)	Dutch Wages (<i>in guilders</i>)
Captain	81 g. 9	—
Mate	54 g. 6	—
Boatswain	54 g. 6	27–28 g.
Steward	40.5 g. 4½	27–28 g.
First Carpenter	54 g. 6	36–40 g.
Second Carpenter	49.5 g. 5½	21 g.
Third Carpenter	45 g. 5	19 g.
Fourth Carpenter	40.5 g. 4½	19 g.
First Cooper	40.5 g. 4½	27–28 g.
Second Cooper	36 g. 4	22 g.
Other Coopers (4)	33 g. 3⅔	19–21 g.
Harpooner (3–4)	40.5 g. 4½	—
Spectioneer (2–3)	36 g. 4	—
Surgeon	54 g. 6	25–28 g.
Sailors (20)	27 g. 3	18 g.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1. A. van Zuylen van Nyevelt, "La pêche à la baleine et les brugeois au XVIIe siècle," *Annales de la Société d'Émulation de Bruges*, 58:1 (1924), 47, 53; C. de Jong, *Geschiedenis van de Oude Nederlandse Walvisvaart*, (Johannesburg: 1978), dl. 2, 384; Private Collection L. Danhieux, Drongen: Journal of the Ostend convoy ship *St. François* (1676), footnotes 2–3.
2. Walter Debrock, "Het Vlaamse kaperschip der 17 de eeuw: de Snauw," *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Marine Academie van België*, 11 (1958–1959), 17–33; Rijksarchief Brugge (RAB), Notariaat Oostende, Depot 1940, 12, 21 September 1705.
3. Jan Parmentier, "The Private East India Ventures from Ostend: The Maritime and Commercial Aspects, 1715–1722," *International Journal of Maritime History*, 5:2 (December 1993), 75–102.
4. Jules Filliaerts, *De Compagnie van Vischvaart te Nieuwpoort, 1727–1737*, (Nieuwpoort: 1939); Daniël Farasijn, *Belgische steden in reliëf: Oostende* (Brussels, 1965), 147.
5. Until now, whaling literature mentions that Sotelet started his company in Nieuwpoort (see, C. de Jong, 385). This is a misconception for Sotelet worked only in Ostend. The *Compagnie van Vischvaart* began its activities also in 1727 and was situated in Nieuwpoort, and specialized in cod and herring fishery. Baron de Sotelet was a major tax farmer who had excellent relations with the banking world of Brussels and Antwerp. V. Janssens, *Het Geldwezen der Oostenrijkse Nederlanden* (Brussels: 1957), 31.
6. C. H. Slechte, "Een noodlottig jaar voor veel zotte en wijze." *De Rotterdamse windhandel van 1720* (Den Haag: 1982).
7. John Carswell, *The South Sea Bubble* (London: 1960).
8. Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussels (ARB), Diverse Manuscripten (DM) 381, ARB, Hof van Beroep (HB) 2119.
9. J. R. Leinenga, *Arctische walvisvangst in de achttiende eeuw. De betekenis van Straat Davis als vangstgebied* (Amsterdam: 1995); G. Jackson, *Hull in the Eighteenth Century. A Study in Economic and Social History*, (London, New York, Toronto: 1972), 165–169.
10. ARB, HB 2126; Admiraliteit 645.
11. Jan Parmentier, "The Ostend Guinea-Trade (1718–1720)," *International Journal of Maritime History*, 2:1 (June 1990), 175–206; Michel Huisman, *La Belgique commerciale sous l'empereur Charles VI. La Compagnie d'Ostende. Étude historique de politique commerciale et coloniale* (Bruxelles: 1902), 308–338.
12. Karel Degrijse, *De Antwerpse fortuinen — Kapitaalaccumulatie, — investering en — rendement te Antwerpen in de 18 de eeuw*, unpublished doctoral thesis (Ghent: 1985), appendix XIV, 32; ARB, HB 2117.
13. ARB, DM 3819.
14. J. Van Beylen, *Schepen van de Nederlanden. Van de late middeleeuwen tot het einde van de 17 de eeuw* (Amsterdam: 1970), 101–109.
15. This flute sailed before under the name *Johanna Bernard* and was originally owned by master shipwright Jacob Gerredse Buys (ARB, DM 3819).
16. C.G. Zorgdrager, *Bloeyende Opkomst der Aloude en Heden daagsche Groenlandsche Visschery... Uitgebreid met een korte Historische Beschryving der noordere Gewesten, voornamentlyk Groenlandt, Yslandt, Spitsbergen, Nova Zembla, Jan Mayen Eilandt, de Straat Davis...* (2e druk, Amsterdam: 1728), 330.
17. 1 Amsterdam feet = 283 mm.
18. Rijksarchief Zeeland, Middelburg (RAZ), Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie (MCC), 16 Minutes of the Board, 1 October and 22 October 1734.
19. William Scoresby, Jr., *An Account of the Arctic Regions, with a History and Description of the Northern Whale-Fishery*, (Edinburgh/London: 1820), 2:65, 75; B. Lubbock, *The Arctic Whalers* (Glasgow: 1937), 81–82; RAB, HB 2121.
20. G. Rees, "Copper sheathing. An example of technological diffusion in the English merchant fleet." *Journal of Transport History*, N.S. 1, 1971/2, 85–94; J. R. Harris, "Copper and shipping in the eighteenth century." *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 19 (1966): 550–68; Universiteitsbibliotheek Ghent (U.B.G.), Fonds Hye-Hoys, MS 1997 Letterbook of L. Bernaert, 26 August 1725.
21. Nine sloops were built by the Ostend brothers Leonard and Jan De Cocker. The other four whale boats were constructed at their fellow townsman Pieter Moentack's wharf (ARB, HB 2122); J. Van Beylen, "Portret van de Nederlandse walvissloep in de 17 de en 18 de eeuw," *Tijdschrift voor Zeegeschiedenis*, 5, 2 (1986): 81–145.
22. ARD, MD 3819, Inventory of the *Faem van Vlaenderen* and of the *St. Joseph* (1728).
23. 1 *razier* = ca. 250 pounds.
24. L. H. van Wijngaarden-Bakker and J. P. Pals, "De voeding van de walvisvaarders," L. Hacquebord and W. Vroom (eds.) *Walvisvaart in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: 1988), 119–123.
25. ARB, HB 2119–2120.
26. Gemeentearchief Amsterdam (GAA), 24/D/7, *Lijst der Groenlandsvaarders van Holland, Hamburg en Bree-men, Als meede de Straat Davidsvaarders in der jaere 1719–1722*; Leinenga, *Arctische walvisvangst in de achttiende eeuw*, 201.
27. GAA, 24/D/7, *Lijst...1723–1724*. The results of the

- Dutch Spitsbergen voyages decreased to 0.8 and 1 on average in the years 1723 and 1724 (Leinenga, *Arctische walvisvangst*, 201).
28. ARB, HB 2126.
 29. Privateering between 1702–1706, Joannes Lindersen collected twenty-two prizes and twelve “ransomed” ships. Walter Debrock, “Oostende en de maritieme oorlog tussen 1702 en 1706,” *Neptunus* (February 1983), 33–43; RAB, Notariaat Oostende, Depot 1940, 31, 4 September 1736; Jan Parmentier, “Guillielmo de Brouwer (1693–1767). En skitse af en kaptajn, handelsmand og rederi i det 18 arhundrede,” *Maritim Kontakt* 14 (Copenhagen: 1990), 78.
 30. ARB, HB 2126. Those officers received a bonus for recruiting seamen in Holland and Dunkirk.
 31. Only one Dunkirk whaling voyage is mentioned during the first half of the eighteenth century. Christian Pfister-Langanay, *Ports, navires et négociants à Dunkerque* (1662–1792), (Dunkirk: 1985), 267.
 32. A. Cabantous, “Migrations frontalières; les courants migratoires et les villes littorales des Pays-Bas flamands au XVIIIe siècle.” *101e congrès des Sociétés Savantes*, (Lille, 1976), 19–37.
 33. Captain van Geldrop was dismissed in 1727, possibly because of his lack of assistance to Commander Stap, who lost the *Walvis* near Spitsbergen. The inexperienced Daniel Lindersen was not contracted for a next voyage (ARB, DM, 3819).
 34. According to the *Gazette van Ghendt* (23 August 1728), the Biscayan vessels caught four whales.
 35. RAB, Notariaat Oostende, Depot 1940, 16 October 1728.
 36. This episode was confirmed by Pieter Berteloot, Joannes Parmentier, and Philippe Terrein, all members of families living in Ostend and Dunkirk.
 37. R. Gonzalez Echegaray, *Balleneros Cantabros*, (Santander: 1978), 201.
 38. I would like to thank the French historian Thierry Du Pasquier for this information.
 39. ARB, HB 2121. This general meeting was held 25 February 1730.
 40. The average ratio on the Ostend East Indiamen was approximately twenty-one men per 100 tons. K. Degryse and J. Parmentier, “Maritime aspects of the Ostend trade to Mocha, India and China (1715–1732), J. R. Bruijn and F. S. Gaastra (ed.), *Ships, Sailors and Spices. East India Companies and Their Shipping in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries*,” NEHA Series 3 (Amsterdam: 1993), 143–144.
 41. ARB, HB 2121; C. de Jong, *Geschiedenis van de Oude Nederlandse Walvisvaart*, dl. 1 (Pretoria: 1972), bijlage I, 287–313.
 42. C. de Jong, *Geschiedenis van de Oude Nederlandse Walvisvaart*, dl. I, 91; R. Ellis, *Men and Whales* (London: 1992), 64.
 43. Zorgdrager, *Bloeyende Opkomst der Aloude en Heden daagsche Groenlandsche Visschery...*, 341–342.
 44. ARB, MD 3206, Journal of the *Vergulde Arent* (1727); RAZ, MCC 1111, Journal of the *Vergulde Walvis* (1735); Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts, 558, Journal of the *De Twee Goe Vrinden* (1715).
 45. Van Wijngaarden-Bakker and Pals, “De voeding van de walvisvaarders,” 119–120.
 46. Besides investing some capital in Ostend privateering during the Spanish Succession War, Balthazar Vignaulx developed a profitable trade with Nantes (salt and wine), Norway (wood), and Spain (fruit and wine). (Stadsarchief Ghent, Familiefonds Handboeken 490–492, 494.
 47. G. F. Wynants (1708–1736); RAB, Notariaat Oostende, Depot 1940, 12–26 (1705–1726)).
 48. ARD, DM 3819, resolution of 20/12/1727; HB 2118, 2127.
 49. Balthazar Vignaulx bought five barrels of *spermaceti* at the 1728 auction on behalf of the Company (ARB, HB 2120, 2122).
 50. A shortage of 61,829 guilders appeared in the Company’s bookkeeping records (ARB, DM 3819).
 51. Stadsarchief Antwerp, Insolvente Boedelkamer 1677, Correspondence of J. De Pret, 5 September 1729.
 52. The last bills were finally settled in 1734 (ARB, HB 2121).
 53. ARB, DM 3819.
 54. ARB, HB 2119, 2120.
 55. Jan Parmentier, “Brugge en Scandinavië,” V. Vermeersch (ed.), *Brugge en Europa*, (Antwerp: 1992), 157.





The Battle for Convoy SC-121, 6–10 March 1943

DAVID SYRETT

At the beginning of March 1943, German U-boats appeared poised to cut the Allied maritime supply lines running between North America and Great Britain. The effects of a German victory in the North Atlantic were beyond calculation. If the U-boats won the Battle of the Atlantic by severing the Allied transatlantic supply lines, Britain could be forced out of the war, there would be no aid to Russia, and the Allied invasion of Northwest Europe in 1944 would be impossible. During February, the Allies lost sixty-three merchant ships amounting to 359,328 tons to German U-boats, while the Germans had lost only nineteen U-boats to enemy action.¹ A German victory in the Battle of the Atlantic appeared to be within reach.

To the Allies at the time, there seemed to be no end in sight to successful German U-boat attacks on transatlantic convoys. On 1 March, Allied intelligence estimated that there were some one hundred U-boats at sea in the North Atlantic, and that seventy-five of them were thought to be operating against convoys running between North America and Great Britain.² In fact, the Allied position in the Atlantic had plummeted so far that the Admiralty in London was actually considering abandoning the strategy of convoys. To many, the situation in the Atlantic appeared to be out of control. For the Allies, “the grand crisis in the Battle of the Atlantic” had arrived.³

On 5 March, there were four patrol lines consisting of some 75 U-boats stationed across the convoy routes. The *Wildfang* and *Burggraf*

groups were deployed into an angled patrol line some 600 miles northeast of Newfoundland, running approximately from 50°N 38°W through 54°N 45°W to 55°N 49°W. To the northeast of the *Wildfang* and *Burggraf* groups, U-boats of the *Neptun* group were stationed in a patrol line stretching approximately from 56°N 30°W to 58°N 34°W.⁴ To the southeast, twelve U-boats of the *Neuland* group had just formed a patrol line running from 54°45'N 27°15'W to 50°57'N 23°45'W.⁵ These U-boats were deployed to intercept Convoy SC-121.

German naval intelligence had broken, and was reading, Allied codes.⁶ From this source, they gained foreknowledge of the course and speed of Convoy SC-121. The Germans thought that the *Wildfang* and *Burggraf* groups would intercept Convoy SC-121 on 5 March.⁷ On 4 March, the BdU [*Befehlshaber der Unterseeboote*] informed the U-boats of the *Wildfang* and *Burggraf* groups to expect the arrival of a convoy proceeding northeast during the evening of 5 March. However, owing to poor visibility caused by bad weather in the North Atlantic, SC-121 slipped by them. Nevertheless, the convoy was sighted by U-405 of the *Neptun* group at 1133 hours on 6 March, some 90 miles to the eastward of these two patrol lines.⁸ U-405 sighted only seven ships of the convoy.⁹

Upon receipt of her sighting report, the BdU ordered the U-boat to shadow and keep contact with the convoy, while twenty-seven U-boats¹⁰ of the *Wildfang*, *Burggraf*, and *Neuland* groups were formed into the *Westmark* and *Ostmark*



HMCS *Trillium* about to receive a boat with a medical officer from USCGC *Spencer*. Central Negative Library at the Canadian Armed Forces Photographic Unit, CN 6142 (USCG photograph).

groups and ordered to chase, intercept, and attack SC-121.¹¹ U-405, in spite of the poor visibility, continued with some interruptions to maintain contact with the Allied convoy.¹² At 2137 hours, the BdU informed the U-boats that the convoy's course was "northeasterly," and ordered the vessels to search for the Allied ships in that direction.¹³

The Allies had a general knowledge of the deployment of the U-boats in the North Atlantic from communications intelligence. In fact, the British, having broken the codes used by the BdU and the U-boats, had been reading their command radio communications since December 1942.¹⁴ However, there were delays and lags in the decoding process which, at the beginning of March 1943, resulted in the Allies reading German radio messages some six or seven days after

their transmission. For example, the BdU's order to U-405 to shadow SC-121 was not decoded by the Allies until 0446 on 12 March.¹⁵

Convoy SC-121 sailed from New York at 0800 hours on 23 February, proceeded northeast along the North American coast, and made a rendezvous with Escort Group A3 in approximately 49°58'N 47°13'W for the voyage across the North Atlantic to Great Britain.¹⁶ When SC-121 was joined by Escort Group A3, under the command of Captain P. R. Heineman, USN, the whole Allied force consisted of 56 merchant ships, including the rescue ship *Melrose Abbey* (HF/DF)¹⁷ escorted by the USCGC *Spencer* (HF/DF), the destroyer USS *Greer* (HF/DF), and the corvettes HMS *Dianthus*, HMCS *Rosthern*, and HMCS *Trillium*. The convoy and her escorts, pushed by "Continuous Southwesterly and West-

erly gales," proceeded eastward at an average speed of 8 knots towards Britain and the U-boats of the *Wildfang*, *Burggraf*, and *Neuland* groups.¹⁸

On 6 March, authorities ashore informed the escorts of SC-121 that the "U-boats were probably preparing for an attack." This was confirmed when the Allied ships obtained a number of HF/DF bearings on that date indicating that U-boats were making radio transmissions from the vicinity of the convoy. In an attempt to force the U-boats to lose contact, at 2135Z hours, Heineman ordered SC-121 to alter course 40 degrees to port. The U-boats remained in contact. Just before midnight, a number of red and white rockets, or flares, were sighted by the escorts. At this time, Heineman received no reports of any ship in the convoy being torpedoed or attacked. At 0200Z hours on 7 March, HMSC *Rosthern* sighted "bright lights bearing about 3 miles astern of the convoy." After an investigation, she came upon a merchant ship rescuing survivors from the merchant ship *Egyptian*, which had been torpedoed by U-230.¹⁹ The merchant ship sank quickly, leaving her crew in the water. *Rosthern* rescued three survivors. However, the merchant ship which also picked up members of the *Egyptian*'s crew was not identified. It was thought afterwards by Heineman to have been the *Empire Impala*, torpedoed and sunk by U-591 shortly thereafter.²⁰ At 0433Z hours, HMS *Dianthus* and *Rosthern* ran down several HF/DF bearings on the starboard quarter of the convoy, but after an hour's search, nothing was found. The two escorts rejoined SC-121. No further contacts with the U-boats were reported during 7 March.²¹

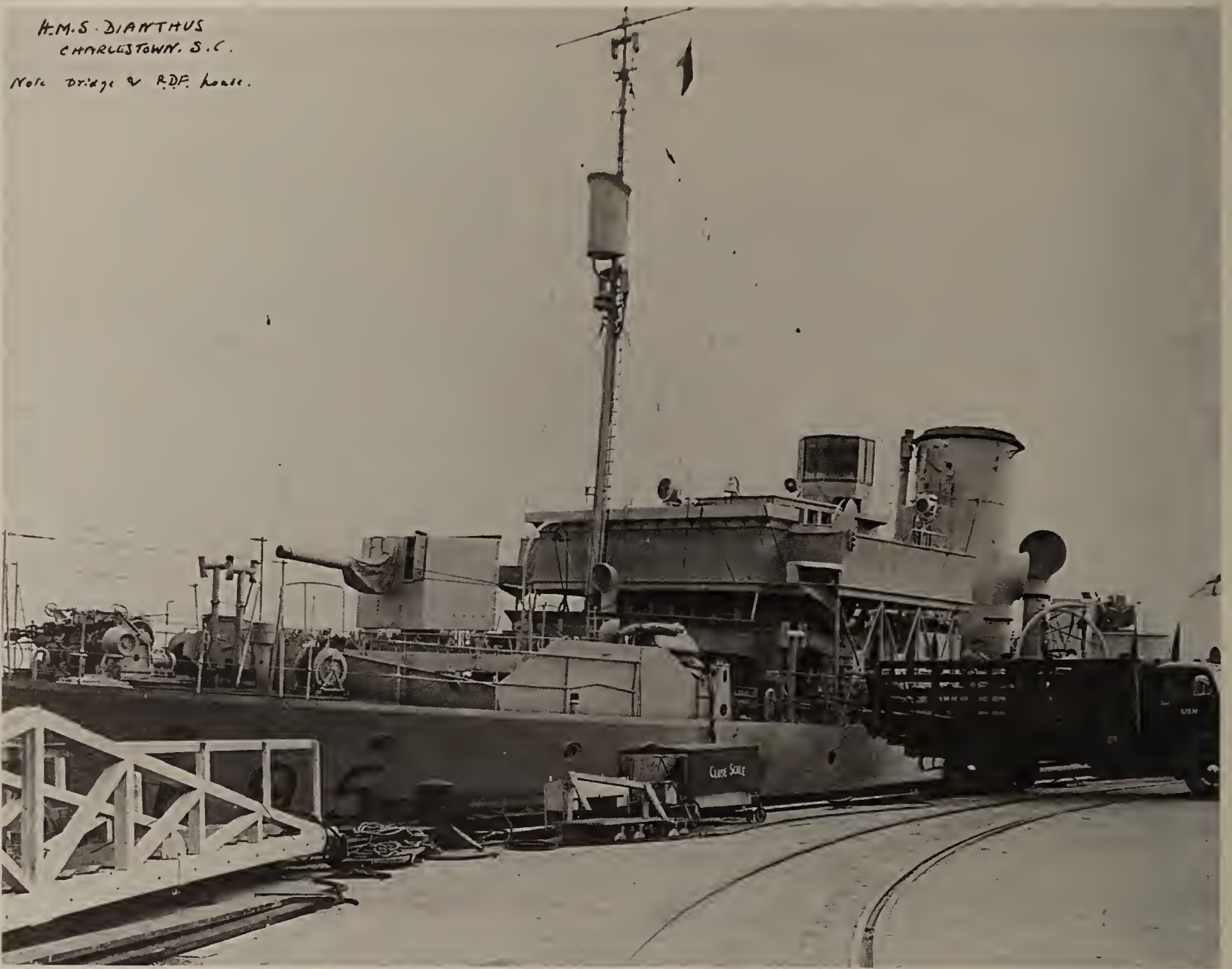
The operations of the U-boats during that day were considerably influenced by "unfavorable and difficult weather conditions." Wind strength was up to Force 10, accompanied by snow and hail which reduced visibility to between 100 and 500 meters. Six U-boats sighted ships of the convoy. The Germans concluded that SC-121 had been split up into several groups, which led the BdU to conclude that "maintaining contact was therefore out of the question."²² At 1158 hours, the BdU, in order to bring more U-boats

into contact with SC-121, ordered the *Ostmark* group to form a patrol line across the projected course of the convoy from 59°39'N 34°24'W to 57°51'N 31°48'W. This patrol line was to be formed, if possible, by 0800A hours on 8 March. The Allies did not decode this order until the early hours of 16 March.²³

At 0875Z hours on 9 March, the USCGC *Spencer* saw a cloud of smoke. A torpedo hit the merchant ship *Guido*, a "romper," about three miles ahead of the convoy, causing an explosion. The *Spencer* proceeded to the area and obtained a sonar contact which was attacked, without result. Several depth charges brought no results. After picking up thirty-five crew members of *Guido*, the Coast Guard cutter returned to her position in the screen of SC-121. The *Guido*, hit on the starboard side in the engine room, immediately begun to sink. The U-boat which torpedoed her is not known. Several hours after the sinking, and unknown at the time to the escort, the U-boats torpedoed and sank four stragglers from the convoy. U-257 torpedoed and sank the merchant ship *Fort Lamy*, while U-591 destroyed the *Vojvoda Putnik*. The merchant ship *Leadgate* was torpedoed and sunk by U-648, and the *Empire Lakeland* by U-190.²⁴ These four sinkings occurred astern of SC-121.

During 8 March, the corvette HMCS *Dauphin* joined SC-121, and HMCS *Trillium* left the convoy.²⁵ The escort was reinforced on 8 March by the dispatch from Iceland and Northern Ireland of four VLR B-24 Liberator aircraft to provide air support. However, air operations were hampered by the inclement weather, which prevented several aircraft from making contact with the convoy. Aircraft E/120 did not sight the convoy and returned to base, although aircraft B/120 did sight several ships of the escort before ending the operation. Aircraft Q/120, while not making contact with SC-121, sighted and attacked a U-boat. As for aircraft R/120, it met the convoy and, while conducting a patrol, sighted and attacked a U-boat with depth charges.²⁶

During the morning of 9 March, SC-121 was again supported by the dispatch of three more VLR B-25 Liberator aircraft from Northern Ireland. Aircraft C/120 returned to base without sighting the convoy. Aircraft G/120 was also



HMS *Dianthus* at Charleston, SC. Central Negative Library at the Canadian Armed Forces Photographic Unit, PMR 83-1658.

forced to return to Northern Ireland without meeting the convoy because of heavy rain, snow, hail, and the "extreme probability of severe icing." However, aircraft N/120 managed to reach SC-121, and, on orders from Heineman, conducted a series of searches and sweeps from 0913Z hours to 1646Z hours, looking for U-boats and stragglers. Several ships but no U-boats were sighted by this aircraft before it returned to Aldergrove in Northern Ireland.²⁷ While aircraft N/120 did not sight any U-boats, several U-boats sighted the Allied aircraft. U-190 and U-641 were both "driven under water by aircraft," and several other U-boats even reported being attacked by an aircraft.²⁸

The escort of SC-121 was reinforced by the arrival of the USCGC *Bibb*, USCGC *Ingham*, and USS *Babbitt* from Iceland. This brought the

strength of the escort up to eight warships.²⁹ However, the effectiveness of the escort was somewhat reduced by a series of equipment malfunctions and communications failures which resulted in Heineman, who was on the *Spencer*, receiving comparatively little in the way of HF/DF information. The few HF/DF bearings which he did receive on 9 March tended to show that the U-boats "were definitely abaft of the beam" of SC-121.³⁰

The *Babbitt*, during the forenoon of 9 March, obtained two sonar contacts off the port beam of the convoy. Some twenty-eight depth charges were dropped by the warship, but these attacks were without result. At 1108Z hours, HMCS *Rosthern* obtained a sonar contact off the starboard beam of SC-121 which was attacked seven times with depth charges. Forty-four depth

charges were dropped by the Canadian warship. After the last attack, "a large oil slick" appeared on the surface, which was lost from view in a hail squall. Sonar contact was also lost. At 1430Z hours, a merchant ship in the convoy reported seeing a torpedo passing from port to starboard. Half an hour later, another merchant ship reported sighting a U-boat. The *Bibb* and *Ingham* conducted a two-hour search for this U-boat off the port quarter and astern without result. Just before dark, *Spencer* and *Ingham* conducted a series of sweeps ahead, while at the same time the *Bibb* and *Babbitt* made sweeps off both quarters and astern. After dark in heavy seas, with a strong westerly wind and conditions of poor visibility, SC-121 made an evasive turn of 25 degrees to port.³¹

Astern of SC-121, unseen by the convoy's escorts, U-530 torpedoed and sank the merchant

ship *Milos*, which was straggling. At 2115Z hours, *Rosthern* heard and then saw a torpedo pass down her starboard side about fifteen feet from the vessel. This torpedo appeared to have been fired from the starboard beam of SC-121. The Canadian corvette searched down the track of the missile but nothing was found. At 2127Z hours, Heineman, on the *Spencer*, heard an explosion. This was U-409 torpedoing the merchant ship *Malantic*. The ship, hit on the port side, dropped astern of SC-121, sinking. The rescue ship *Melrose Abbey*, screened by the *Bibb*, rescued twenty-one survivors out of a crew of forty-six. While the escorts hunted for the U-boat which had torpedoed the *Malantic*, the tanker *Rosewood* transmitted "SSS" over the radio at 2145Z hours: the signal that she was being attacked by a U-boat. The convoy was illuminated, but there were no indications, most



HMCS *Rothstern*. Central Negative Library at the Canadian Armed Forces Photographic Unit, CN 3529.

likely owing to the lack of visibility and the confusion of the situation, that the *Rosewood* had been attacked. The commodore of the convoy reported to Heineman that the *Rosewood* "was still with the convoy." In fact, the ship had been torpedoed by U-409.³²

The last incident on 9 March occurred at about 2153Z hours, just after the *Rosewood* reported having been attacked. The *Dauphin* had sighted a U-boat. The Canadian corvette illuminated the area and headed for the position of the U-boat which had disappeared. No contact with the German vessel was obtained.³³

At daylight on 10 March, the *Rosewood* was absent from convoy. At 1150Z hours, it was learned that the tanker was astern of SC-121 and had "requested assistance." The *Bibb* was despatched astern of the convoy to search for the *Rosewood* and found the ship broken into two drifting hulks. There were no survivors. The American warship sank the remains of the *Rosewood* before returning to the screen of SC-121. Later, Heineman mistakenly concluded that the *Malantic* had been torpedoed by a U-boat which had gotten inside the screen from ahead or from the port bow, while the *Rosewood* had been attacked by another U-boat which had approached from astern or the port quarter.

By 1200 hours, SC-121's escorts, with the exception of the *Bibb*, which was astern of the Allied force, had all returned to their stations in the convoy's screen. At this time, numerous HF/DF bearings were being obtained by the Allied ships, but none of the transmissions appeared to be coming from positions close to SC-121. Most of them were thought to be coming from astern of the convoy. Nevertheless, at 0005Z hours, the merchant ship *Nailsea Court* reported over the radio that she was torpedoed, and an explosion was heard from within the convoy. She had been torpedoed by U-229. Three minutes later, U-405 torpedoed the merchant ship *Bonneville*. At 0010Z hours, another torpedo from U-229 hit the bow of the merchant ship *Coulmore*. At 1025Z hours, the merchant ship *Scorton* reported ramming a U-boat. This

was U-665, which escaped without damage. The convoy was illuminated and the escorts began to hunt for the U-boats. Nothing was found. The only contact occurred when the *Dauphin* heard on her sonar what was thought to be a torpedo. The Canadian warship altered course towards the location from which the torpedo was thought to have been fired and attacked with two depth charges, but no contact was established.³⁴

After the escorts had completed a search for the attacking U-boats, they returned to their stations. The *Dauphin*, screened by the USS *Greer*, was later sent astern to rescue the survivors from the torpedoed merchant ships. The two Allied warships were joined by the *Bibb* and the rescue ship *Melrose Abbey*. Ten members of the crews of the *Nailsea Court* and *Bonneville* were rescued, as were eleven men from the *Coulmore*, which was still afloat. The commander of the *Greer* believed that the men on the *Coulmore* had panicked and "had unnecessarily abandoned the ship." Later, tugs would be sent to salvage the *Coulmore*. The ship was successfully towed to Britain.³⁵ By 0937Z hours, the three warships and the *Melrose Abbey* had returned to SC-121.

There were no successful attacks on SC-121 during 10 March, although the U-boats remained in contact with the convoy. At 1807, U-336 reported being driven away from the convoy by a destroyer. At 2100, U-447 informed the BdU that her attack periscope and one of her electric motors were damaged. At 2350, U-229 radioed "convoy not found." Even though a number of U-boats were still maintaining contact with SC-121 during 10 March, the battle was over. The German command authorities decided to end the operation.³⁶

The U-boats were, no doubt, victorious in the battle for Convoy SC-121. The Germans believed that they had sunk nine Allied ships and damaged two others,³⁷ when in fact the number was twelve (*Egyptian*, *Impala*, *Guido*, *Fort Lamy*, *Vojvoda Putnik*, *Empire Lakeland*, *Leadgate*, *Milos*, *Malantic*, *Bonneville*, *Nailsea Court*, *Rosewood*), while the *Scorton* and *Coulmore* were damaged. No U-boats were lost. German success was in great part owing to

communications intelligence, which gave the BdU foreknowledge of the convoy route and enabled them to deploy a large number of U-boats. Bad weather at the time — strong westerly gales, snow, and hail — were cited by the Germans as hampering the operations of the U-boats.³⁸ In reality, the weather probably greatly assisted them, for the bad weather broke up the formation of SC-121, causing a number of ships to straggle. Indeed, of the twelve Allied ships sunk, the *Guido* was a romper, the *Empire Impala* had dropped astern of the convoy to rescue survivors, and five were stragglers (*Fort Lamy*, *Vojvoda Putnik*, *Leadgate*, *Empire Lakeland*, *Milos*). Thus, communications intelligence, bad weather in the North Atlantic, and the skill of the Germans had all combined to give the U-boats a major victory in the Battle for SC-121.

The Allies lost the battle for SC-121 due to a failure of communications intelligence. The delays in decoding German radio messages prevented the Allies from learning of the deployment of the *Wildfang*, *Burggraf*, *Neptun*, and *Neuland* groups, making it impossible to reroute so as to avoid enemy vessels. Compounding this failure of intelligence was the harsh weather in the North Atlantic during the passage of SC-121. Not only did poor visibility and westerly gales cause the ships of the convoy to straggle making them easy targets for the U-boats, but the weather also hampered the deployment of Allied aircraft. Owing to these conditions, a number of aircraft dispatched to assist SC-121 never reached the convoy. After the battle, Heineman cited the “urgent need for more air coverage.”

Further, the ships during the battle suffered from equipment failures which hampered their combat effectiveness. Heineman’s ship, the *Spencer*, had defective radio equipment which greatly impeded the ability of the commander of Escort Group A3 to communicate with the ships of his command. At one point, two of the three HF/DF sets on the ships of the escort were inoperative. At various times, the radio sets on the ships malfunctioned or broke down, as did

the sonars on three of the escorts.³⁹ From beginning to end of the passage, efforts to defend the convoy were hampered by lack of intelligence, bad weather, insufficient air support, and equipment failures.

The battle for SC-121 was neither the only nor the last defeat suffered by the Allies in the North Atlantic during March of 1943. Later in the month, they would lose, under circumstances similar to those encountered by SC-121, twenty-two ships to the U-boats in a battle fought over Convoys SC-122 and HX 229. A German victory in the battle of the Atlantic appeared to be at hand. During March of 1943, U-boats sank 108 Allied merchant ships amounting to 627,377 tons, while the Allies sank only thirteen U-boats during that same period. This was the climax of the German offensive against Allied transatlantic convoys. March of 1943 was the closest the U-boats would come to cutting the Allied convoy routes between North America and Great Britain. To the Allies, this was “the hour before the dawn.” In April and May 1943, they would overcome their problems and, in a series of hard fought convoy battles, would decisively vanquish the U-boats in the North Atlantic.⁴⁰



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Acknowledgment

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Notes

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7. BdU War Diary, 3 March 1943. Microfilm edition of the English translation of this source. The original is at the Naval Historical Center, Washington, DC.
8. SRGN, ff. 12760, 12854.
9. Public Record Office, DEFE 3/712, intercepted 1253/6/3/43 decoded 0440/12/3/43.
10. *Westmark*: U-405, U-409, U-591, U-230, U-228, U-566, U-616, U-448, U-526, U-634, U-527, U-659, U-523, U-709, U-359, U-332, U-432. *Ostmark*: U-229, U-665, U-633, U-641, U-447, U-190, U-439, U-530, U-618, U-642.
11. BdU War Diary, 6 March 1943.
12. German Naval Staff, Operations Division War Diary, 6 March 1943. Microfilm edition of the English translation of this source. The original is in the Naval Historical Center, Washington, DC.
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20. Report of SC-121; Rohwer, *Axis Submarine Successes*, 154.
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29. USCGC *Spencer*, USCGC *Ingham*, USCGC *Bibb*, USS Greer, USS *Babbitt*, HMS *Dianthus*, HMCS *Rosthern*, and HMCS *Dauphin*.
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 37. SRGN, f. 13030.
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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Francis B. Lothrop, Jr., Prize for the best article published in *The American Neptune*, Volume 56 for 1996 is awarded to Al Miller, author of "A Tugman's Story: Life and Times of B. B. Inman." Al is employed as an information specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. We here at the *Neptune* wish to extend our most sincere congratulations.

No awards were made for articles in the fields of Maritime Arts or Maritime Modeling. They are again offered for Volume 57 for 1997.



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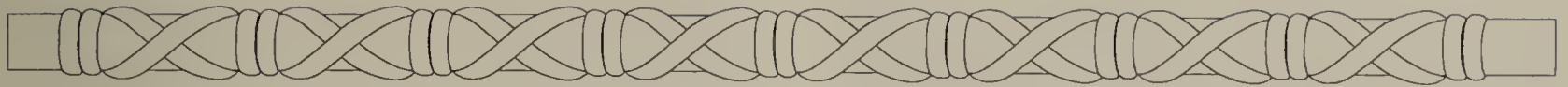
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Hospitals and Mariners: A Study in Great Lakes Maritime History

JOHN ODIN JENSEN

Mariners, employed on floating workplaces that move from port to port, are elusive subjects for sustained historical investigation. While diaries, letters, and memoirs can provide windows into the experience of maritime life, they represent exceptional efforts on the part of individual mariners. They are, furthermore, relatively rare, particularly among the laborers of less exotic areas of maritime activity.

Institutional records exist for some groups of mariners in the form of muster rolls for military vessels and crew lists for vessels engaged in foreign trades. Military personnel and international laborers, however, made up only a minority of the mariners working in America's maritime trades, especially in the years after the Civil War. For the most common types of nineteenth-century mariners, the hundreds of thousands of men (and a smaller, but significant, number of women) who worked on domestic vessels navigating in coastal, lake, and river trades of an expanding nation, few records were kept. Fewer still have survived. Through a study of the medical records of steamboat and sailing mariners who received medical assistance through the United States Marine Hospital Service in Milwaukee, Wisconsin — one of the busiest domestic ports in the decade following the Civil War — this article suggests new avenues for studying domestic maritime life in the United States.

For nearly two hundred years, from 1798 to

1981, the United States government through the Marine Hospital Service (later the United States Public Health Service) cared for sick and injured mariners. Whether manning clipper ships bringing tea from the Orient, cotton steamboats on the muddy Mississippi, or grain schooners on the Great Lakes, virtually all mariners working on American vessels were entitled to government-sponsored health care.¹ Marine hospital records, in their many forms, preserve specific information about tens of thousands of individual mariners and can provide maritime historians with rich, largely untapped, resources for reconstructing broad patterns of maritime life. Using hospital records requires some care, and this article is, by necessity, both methodological and historical. Delving into aspects of hospital history and historical method, it may be of less interest to some readers than the general historical sections that follow.

During the 1980s, hospital patient records emerged as important new sources for studying the history of medicine. Reacting against several generations of scholarship that emphasized the triumphs of medicine, the memories of physicians, and the memorialization of specific hospitals, historians saw in patient records an opportunity to examine medicine and hospital life as it had actually been practiced rather than as it was supposed to have been

practiced, according to contemporary medical journals and the memorialist writings of physicians, philanthropists, and other elite actors.²

Writing in 1990, medical historian Guenter Risse, an early advocate of patient records as historical sources, noted many benefits and pitfalls associated with hospital-generated records. Citing his own work on the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, he discussed the many aspects of hospital life open to investigation through institutionally-generated records. Hospital financial records, for example, revealed much about philanthropic networks in Edinburgh. He also discussed in detail the use of patient registers similar to the Milwaukee hospital permit register that provides the foundation for this study. Listing names, sexes, ages, diagnosis information, dates of admittance and discharge, and condition on discharge, these registers sometimes contain variables that give clues to patients' social status and occupation.³ In total, such information can allow for an extended and quite detailed social and administrative reconstruction of hospital life.

Like Edinburgh's Royal Infirmary, most nineteenth century American hospitals were operated as charities. They catered primarily to people lacking resources for adequate home care. In practice, these people were most often immigrants, transients, or very poor, and a serious social stigma was attached to entering a hospital. As charitable institutions, hospitals were also selective in whom they admitted. Social status and the nature of the medical ailment affected whether one would go to or even be admitted by a hospital. The rich and the unworthy poor were unlikely candidates for admission, as were the gravely ill (hospitals deliberately kept mortality rates as low as possible) and those suffering from loathsome conditions such as syphilis or contagious diseases like small pox. These factors, which differed slightly among institutions and tended to change with time, created patient populations that did not directly reflect the larger local community. Because of these types of social "filters," Risse cautions that hospital morbidity, for example, is not representative of community health conditions. In short, most hospital registers reveal much about medical

practice, health, and society within a specific institution, but have limited applicability outside of the hospital.⁴

For maritime historians, marine hospital records possess broader historical significance and have wider applicability. This broader significance is elaborated in the 1982 volume *Sources and Methods of Historical Demography* by historical demographers Katherine Lynch and Dennis Willigan. In their extended discussion of institutional records — a category hospital records clearly fit — Lynch and Willigan note:

*Inmates born, residing, and/or dying in such institutions — from foundling homes to prisons, monasteries, or work-houses — were, in some important ways, removed from the mainstream of their societies, either temporarily or permanently. Their fates may have had little effect on aggregate level demographic development. However, a consideration of the groups from which inmates were recruited, their own institutional "careers," and their rates of entering and leaving such institutions provides a richer understanding not only of institutional subgroups within historical populations but also of those populations themselves.*⁵

Mariners in the 1870s were often isolated from the "mainstream of their societies" long before entering the hospital. This isolation can be seen by examining a population schedule from the 1870 United States Census. Occupational tabulations report a national figure of 56,663 sailors and 7,975 steamboat men and women living in the United States. Concerned with tax collections and armed with better data, the 1874 annual report for the Marine Hospital Service estimated that 157,500 people were employed on United States vessels and subject to hospital tax.⁶ Many, if not most, mariners working in the United States were missed by the most comprehensive social survey of the time. In seeking medical aid from the federal government, tens of thousands seamen became visible to the larger society.

The two most common social filters that affected hospital admissions during the nineteenth century did not apply to mariners. First, according to the federal laws and rules governing the Marine Hospital Service, virtually all seamen were entitled to admission, and thus social worthiness was not an issue. Second, the significant presence of potentially terminal conditions like tuberculosis, epidemic infectious diseases like small pox, and the prevalence of venereal disease among the medical conditions listed in the marine hospital permit register demonstrate that typical medical filters of poor prognosis, contagion, and immorality were not in place.

Perhaps just as important, seamen had few reasons not to go to the hospital when ill. The social stigma attached to hospital stays would not have been a major deterrent. Sailors usually had their own wards (as they did in Milwaukee) and often their own hospitals. Possessing a common occupational identity within the hospital structure, seamen would have had little fear that their personal reputations would suffer from an association with a hospital. (Being a sailor could, in some circles, be stigma enough and a hospital stay would be of little consequence.) Finally, in contrast with most other hospital patients of the 1870s, hospitalized mariners were not recipients of charity. By virtue of mandatory monthly hospital dues that were deducted from seamen's pay, hospital care was an entitlement.

Mariners also had special reasons to seek hospital care during the mid-nineteenth century. The nature of maritime life promoted periods of temporary dependency. Injured or ill, mariners put ashore in ports far from home lacked the most important medical resource of the nineteenth century, a caring family. Being ashore also meant unemployment, or at least being unpaid. Shelter, food, and necessary medicines were expensive and in the marine ward of a hospital, mariners could obtain them all for free.

Virtually all mariners, or "seamen" as they were usually referred to in the bureaucratic language of the period, were eligible for government-paid hospital care. The term "seaman" provided a convenient administrative label for government and hospital officials. It also masked significant differences and histori-

cally important patterns within America's maritime populations. Because relevant details about each mariner were recorded in records such as the Milwaukee permit register these documents can be analyzed to recreate broader patterns of maritime life. The inclusive nature of the marine hospital medical entitlement, the lack of social and medical barriers to admission, and the particular need seamen had for institutional care, all suggest that a majority of seriously ill or injured sailors landing at Milwaukee or other ports would seek care through the Marine Hospital Service. It also appears likely that major *social* as well as medical patterns found among the local marine hospital population mirrored closely, if imperfectly, those that existed among the larger population of mariners calling at Milwaukee. Ultimately, marine hospital registers like ones kept for Milwaukee and other ports are dissimilar from most hospital registers of the period in that they can tell us much about the greater population of mariners who did not enter the hospital. The following analysis is based upon this theoretical proposition.

The decade following the Civil War found American merchant shipping on the high seas at a low ebb. A greatly reduced fleet, outmoded technology, high labor and building costs, and stiff (often subsidized) international competition were just a few of the problems facing an industry that had led the world only a generation before. The fall of the United States maritime industries, however, was far from universal. Domestic maritime enterprises, protected from foreign competition by law and geography, were thriving. By 1871, the tonnage of vessels clearing American harbors for coastal trips was four times that of ships embarking on foreign voyages. Raw numbers emphasize this disparity even more strongly. For the federal fiscal year ending 30 June 1871, the total tonnage of American ships clearing for domestic trips amounted to 28,360,186 tons, while foreign clearances came to only 6,917,802 tons.⁷

In terms of maritime activity, no region of the United States was busier than the Great Lakes. With growing tonnage in bulk commodi-

ties like grain, lumber, and, increasingly, iron ore, as well as a considerable passenger and package goods trade, shipping on the Great Lakes was booming in the years after the Civil War. By 1871, of the ninety-five customs districts around the country that reported domestic shipping clearances, thirteen Great Lakes districts accounted for 14,011,571 tons or 49.4 percent of the national total. The figure for total numbers of voyages is even more impressive. Government figures for 1871 give a national total of 77,509 clearances for vessels engaged in coastal trade or fishing; 50,200 of these, or 64.8 percent, were from Great Lakes ports. These are startling figures when one considers that most of these ports had not existed fifty years before.⁸

During the 1870s, Milwaukee ranked second in traffic volume among all the Great Lakes ports; only Chicago was busier. Milwaukee was also the busiest domestic steamboat port with annual arrivals of nearly three thousand steam vessels between 1871 and 1877. Sail traffic was considerable as well. In 1871, 3,727 sailing vessels entered Milwaukee in coastal trips. By 1873, that number climbed to 4,722, and it did not drop below 4,000 for the rest of the decade.⁹

Such vigorous commerce required a large labor force. The actual number of Great Lakes mariners working during this period is unknown. Figures based upon the estimated average crew size for all enrolled sail and steam vessels suggest that, at a conservative minimum, twenty thousand persons were needed to man the Great Lakes fleet at the beginning of the 1870s. Better data are available for individual ports. For each of the years of this study where the figures are available (1871–73, 1875–76), more than 90,000 mariners landed at Milwaukee. Depending upon the year, 75 to 80 percent of these mariners were from steam vessels.¹⁰ Who were these people? Where did they come from? What were their working conditions like? The answers provided by the few scholars who have studied Great Lakes mariners are far from satisfactory.

Relatively little is known about Great Lakes sailors during the 1870s, a decade when sail and steam vessels vied for dominance on the lakes. Scholars with some interest in Great Lakes labor still turn to Henry Elmer Hoagland's book-length

essay, "Wage Bargaining on the Vessels of the Great Lakes," published by the University of Illinois in 1917 and Charles P. Larrowe's 1959 monograph, *Maritime Labor Relations on the Great Lakes*. Hoagland, a former special investigator for the United States Commission on Industrial Relations, presents a decidedly unflattering picture of Gilded Age Great Lakes mariners. Reflecting a classic Progressive Era concern for order and a proper social environment, Hoagland noted that in "every activity of the employee's life irregularity and chance ruled." This irregularity and the degraded nature of working conditions attracted a poor class of men:

[T]he men employed on the boats were usually single men and had no ties to bind them to a job. This combination of the chance element of high wages or no wages; of work days of long hours, fatiguing work, poor food, unsanitary living conditions, and ill treatment by the officers of the boats, followed by idle days in port spent in drunkenness and carousals; and the lack of ties which make men look to the future and try to provide for it, served to attract to the Lakes an irresponsible set of men and to make them more unsteady the longer they remained on the boats.¹¹

Hoagland's picture of Great Lakes mariners is not entirely monolithic. He offers colorful descriptions for several classes of seamen. Deckhands, he notes, were "a shifting conglomerate of tramps, criminals, school boys, and young men who had some expectation of following the Lakes for a living." Firemen, who had the difficult job of feeding the boilers of steamers, were "a hardier set of men" and "were perhaps even more difficult to manage." Hoagland distinguished between steamboat workers and sailors whose work on sailing ships "required a higher degree of skill and intelligence and hence attracted the most desirable of unlicensed men." Sailors considered themselves skilled workers and looked down upon steamboatmen. The original Great Lakes seaman's union, the Chicago Seaman's Benevolent Union, which rose in

prominence and power in the late 1870s and early 1880s, excluded steamboat workers entirely.¹²

Charles Larrowe's later, and largely derivative, account uncritically accepts Hoagland's characterizations of Gilded Age mariners. He takes Hoagland's critical line further and blames the sailors for failing to make common cause with steamboat workers:

*By 1880, steam-driven vessels were supplanting sailing ships at a rapidly accelerating rate, and the seamen who manned the steamships played into the employers' hands. It was an attitude of contempt, which the sailors expressed in the phrase, "Wooden ships, iron men; Iron ships, wooden men." With the sailor zealously trying to preserve the purity of this craft by excluding from the union seamen who worked on steamships, the union was ill-prepared to guard itself against its real adversary, the employers.*¹³

Norwegian historian Knut Gjerset offers a very different characterization of Great Lakes maritime life and labor during the Gilded Age. Rather than focusing exclusively on workplace issues, Gjerset addresses the relationship between community and work. His *Norwegian Sailors on the Great Lakes: A Chapter in the History of American Inland Transportation* (1928), remains the only book to address specifically the issue of ethnicity and work on the Lakes. Instead of encountering the meanness and misery described by Hoagland and Larrowe, Gjerset's Norwegian sailors found the lakes a maritime paradise. Used to difficult ocean service at wages of only three to ten dollars per month, men like Halvor Hanson of Manitowoc found the \$1.75 per day that Great Lakes sailing was paying in 1873 a magnificent sum. Rather than chronic social instability, the Great Lakes offered another Manitowoc Norwegian, Harry Gresholdt, the opportunity to build and enjoy his home while continuing his maritime career. Gjerset, however, partially echoes Hoagland and Larrowe on the subject of steam vessels. His

Norwegian sailors were staunch traditionalists who, by eschewing service on steam vessels and resisting innovation in shipbuilding technology, sacrificed their chance for a leading position in the emerging modern Great Lakes shipping industry.¹⁴

All three books have significant flaws. Hoagland and Larrowe are guilty of failing to scrutinize their sources effectively. Their interpretations of Gilded Age mariners depend far too much on "facts" pulled out of later union proceedings and trade journals. Often the producers of these documents had significant agendas that colored their accounts. Ultimately, both Hoagland's and Larrowe's books lack sufficient empirical grounding to justify their sweeping generalizations about the nature of Great Lakes mariners and life in the 1870s and 1880s.

Unlike Hoagland and Larrowe, Gjerset focuses extensively upon the lives of named, individual mariners. While he writes in loving detail about the hopes and motivations of Norwegian sailors, his ethnocentric historical agenda raises significant issues of objectivity. Interested in celebrating the significance of Norwegians in the development of the United States, Gjerset has a tendency to exaggerate their influence on the local maritime enterprise. Writing during a period known for Americanization programs and successful efforts to limit immigration, Gjerset's desire to show the Norwegian sailors as "good Americans" may account for the selection of mariners included in his book. Gjerset's Norwegian sailors are respectable, thrifty, home-centered men. Unsavory Norwegian sailors are rarely mentioned — and never by name.¹⁵

Despite their differences in interpretation and the clear methodological problems with aspects of their scholarship, Hoagland's, Larrowe's, and Gjerset's accounts of mariners in the 1870s and 1880s correspond in certain ways and should not be ignored. For all three scholars, technological change, primarily in the form of the shift from sail to steam vessels, led to major alterations in the working lives and character of Great Lakes mariners. In all three accounts, a deep social gulf separates sail and steam mariners. Sailors are said to be men of better character, higher social standing, and more skill than

Table 1				Table 2			
Age of Mariners by Selected Categories				Years of Service on United States Vessels by Selected Categories			
Mariner Category	N	Mean	St. dev.	Mariner Category	N	Mean	St. dev.
All Mariners	1138	30.72	8.81	All Mariners	1091	10.56	7.91
Region of Birth				Region of Birth			
Canada/BNA	50.00	27.22	6.94	Canada/BNA	50.00	8.80	6.11
Germany	54.00	28.13	7.24	Germany	53.00	7.74	7.27
Ireland	217.00	32.54	8.56	Ireland	212.00	12.46	7.30
Scandinavia	129.00	30.85	8.09	Scandinavia	126.00	9.31	7.10
Great Britain	115.00	32.89	9.95	Great Britain	110.00	12.16	8.49
United States	331.00	28.78	8.43	United States	327.00	10.79	8.18
Workplace Type				Workplace Type			
Steam	559	29.31	9.02	Steam	537	9.1	7.41
Sail	463	32.13	8.29	Sail	453	12.08	8.17

lowly steamboat workers. With the increasing dominance of steam power in the 1880s came a major decline in the social status of Great Lakes mariners. This decline was so profound that many "real" sailors, like Gjerset's Norwegians and Hoagland's early union men, were unable to accept the new conditions, and many eventually left the lake.

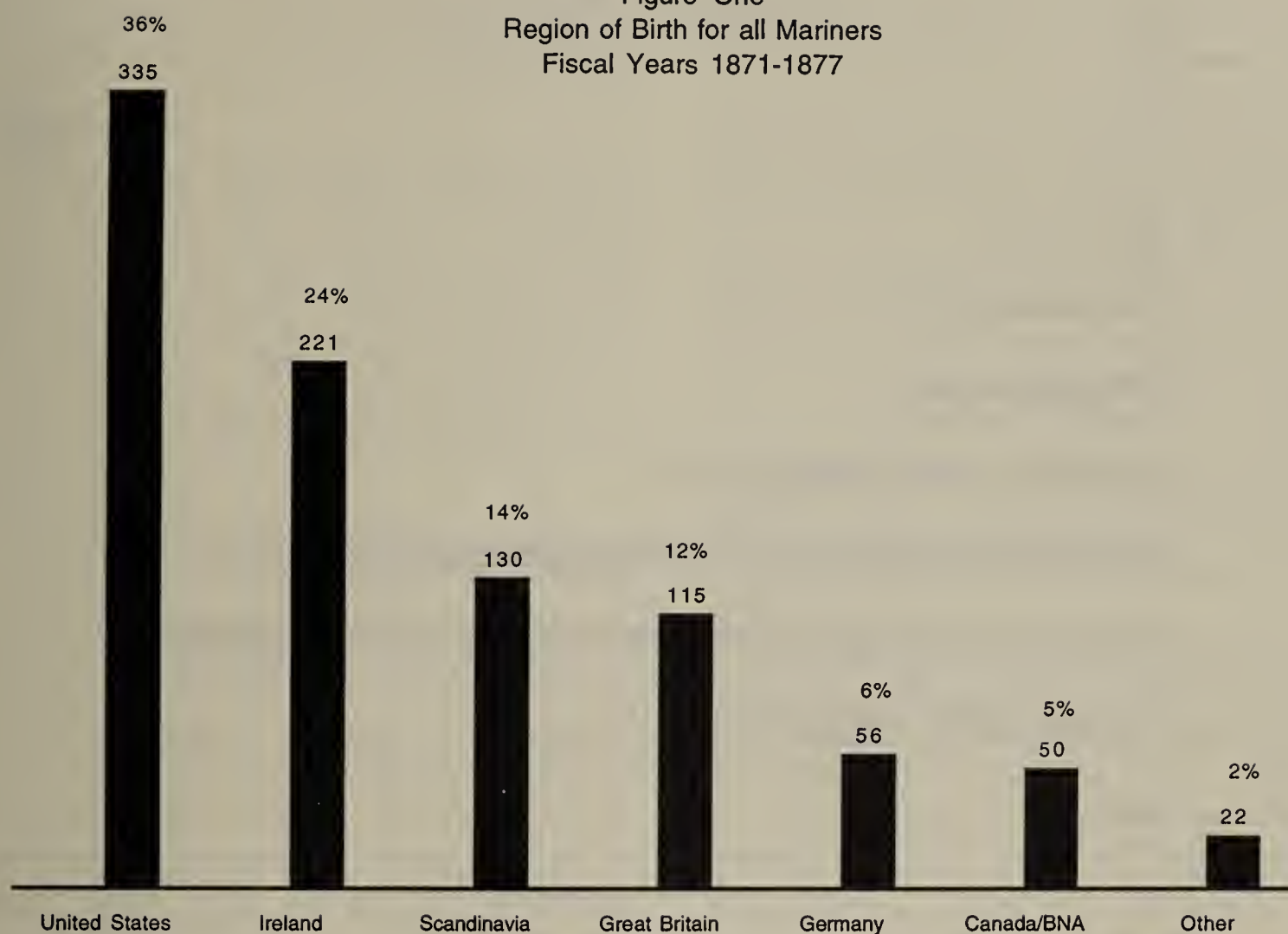
The data preserved in the Milwaukee marine hospital permit register provides some interesting empirical answers to important social historical questions raised by Hoagland, Larowe, and Gjerset. The register contains records for 1,179 seaman who sought medical treatment through the Marine Hospital Service between 1 July 1870 and 30 June 1877. In order to receive medical treatment from the Marine Hospital Service, a sick or injured mariner obtained a note from the captain or agent of his last vessel of service that attested to their payment of hospital dues. This note was provided to the collector of customs or his agent (later to the marine surgeon himself), who, if everything was in order, issued a permit entitling the mariner to a specific number of days of hospital care. This permit was recorded in a large register along with information about the permit holder including name, age, nativity, years of service on the American vessels, the name and type of the last vessel served upon, a medical diagnosis, result of treatment, and dates

of hospital admission and discharge. A final field on the register was reserved for additional remarks, most often used in cases where permits were extended in duration or when an unusual expense occurred. For the following analysis only five of these fields (age, years of service, vessel type, nativity, and diagnosis) were employed.

In order to provide baseline data about Great Lakes mariners, in the following sections a series of age, experience, and nativity profiles are presented for the patients who received hospital permits. In an effort to test the broader usefulness of medical records to maritime historians, specific characteristics of the sail and steam patient populations are also compared. For the purposes of this introductory essay, sail and steam comparisons are limited to four areas where statistically significant differences were found between sail and steam mariners: age, years of experience, region of birth, and injury patterns.¹⁶

Sailing during the nineteenth century has been widely regarded by historians as a young man's occupation. As a group, Milwaukee mariners showed a wide variation in age. The average age for the entire group was 30.7 years. Ages ranged from sixteen to sixty-eight years. Most were in their twenties and thirties, with fully half between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age.

Figure One
Region of Birth for all Mariners
Fiscal Years 1871-1877



Years of experience as a seaman on American vessels varied considerably as well. Some mariners had served as little as two months, while one old salt from Massachusetts had served before the mast for half a century. It was, in general, an experienced group with three quarters of the mariners having served five years or more, one half ten years or more, and one quarter more than fifteen years. The average length of service was 10.6 years.

In the 1870s, the Midwest was a land of immigrants. This is reflected in the Great Lakes' workforce. The 929 permits that included nativity data revealed some clear patterns.¹⁷ Ninety-eight percent of the mariners came from one of six regional groups. The largest group were the United States-born, but at thirty-six percent, they were far from a majority. The next largest group, at twenty-four percent, were those born in Ireland. Scandinavian-born (mostly Norwegian-born) mariners made up the third largest group at fourteen percent. Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) contributed twelve percent of

the group, Germany, six percent, and Canada and other British North American Provinces five percent.

The hospital register preserves limited state and local level birthplace data for American sailors. As a group, the American mariners in the early 1870s were not natives of the shores of the Great Lakes. The hospital register preserves the state or community of birth for 102 of the American seamen; only twenty permits were issued to mariners from Midwest/old northwest states.¹⁸ While at least five more mariners were native to New York Great Lakes communities, it appears that considerably less than half of that group hailed from the Great Lakes region.

What light can patient records shed on the questions about sail and steam workers raised by Hoagland, Larowe, and Gjerset? While they cannot tell us anything directly about social class, intelligence, or behavior, the patient records can be examined to see if differences appear between the sail and steam patient groups. In the case of the Milwaukee marine

Figure Two
Age of Sail and Steam Mariners
Fiscal Years 1871-1877

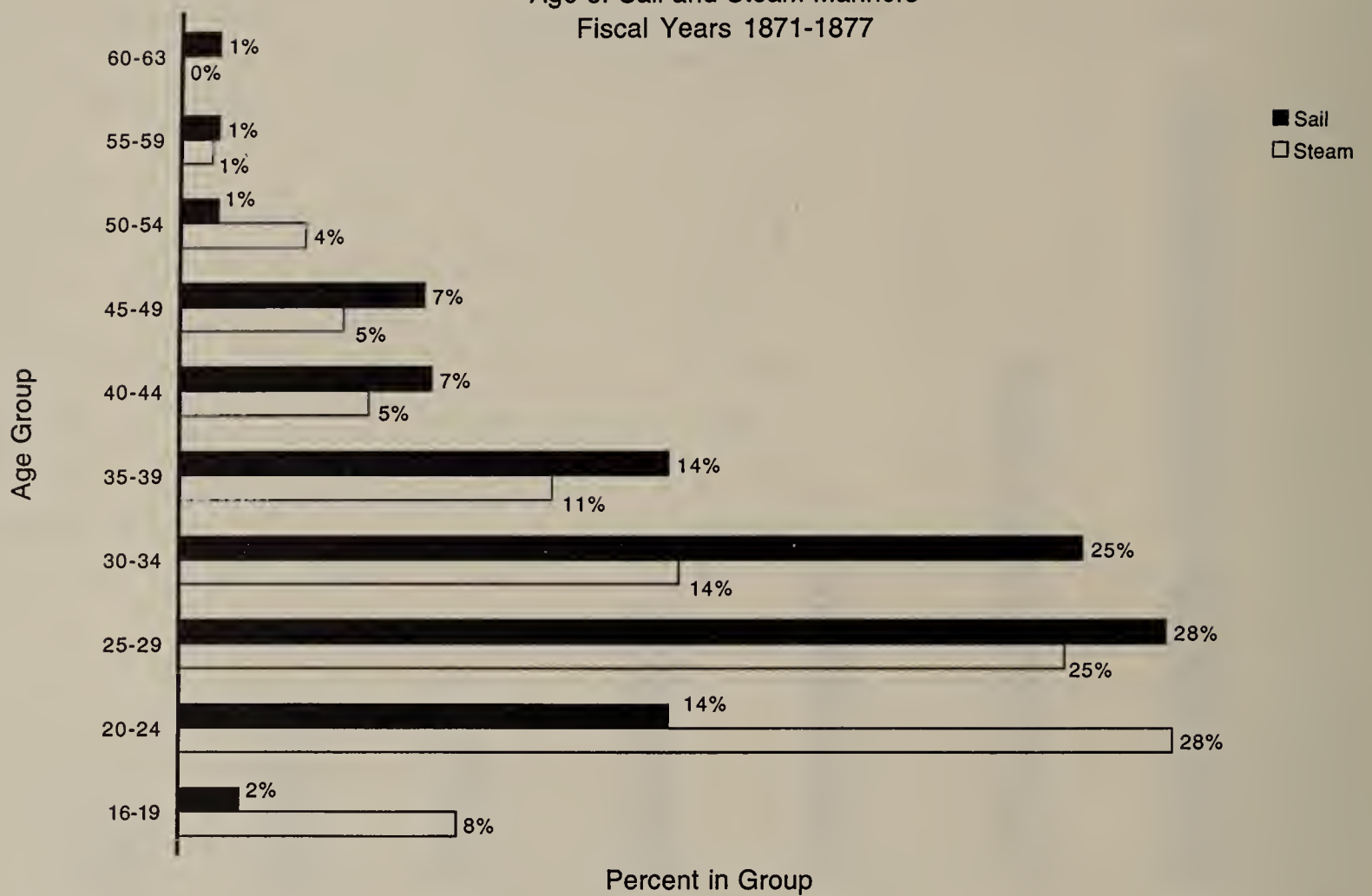
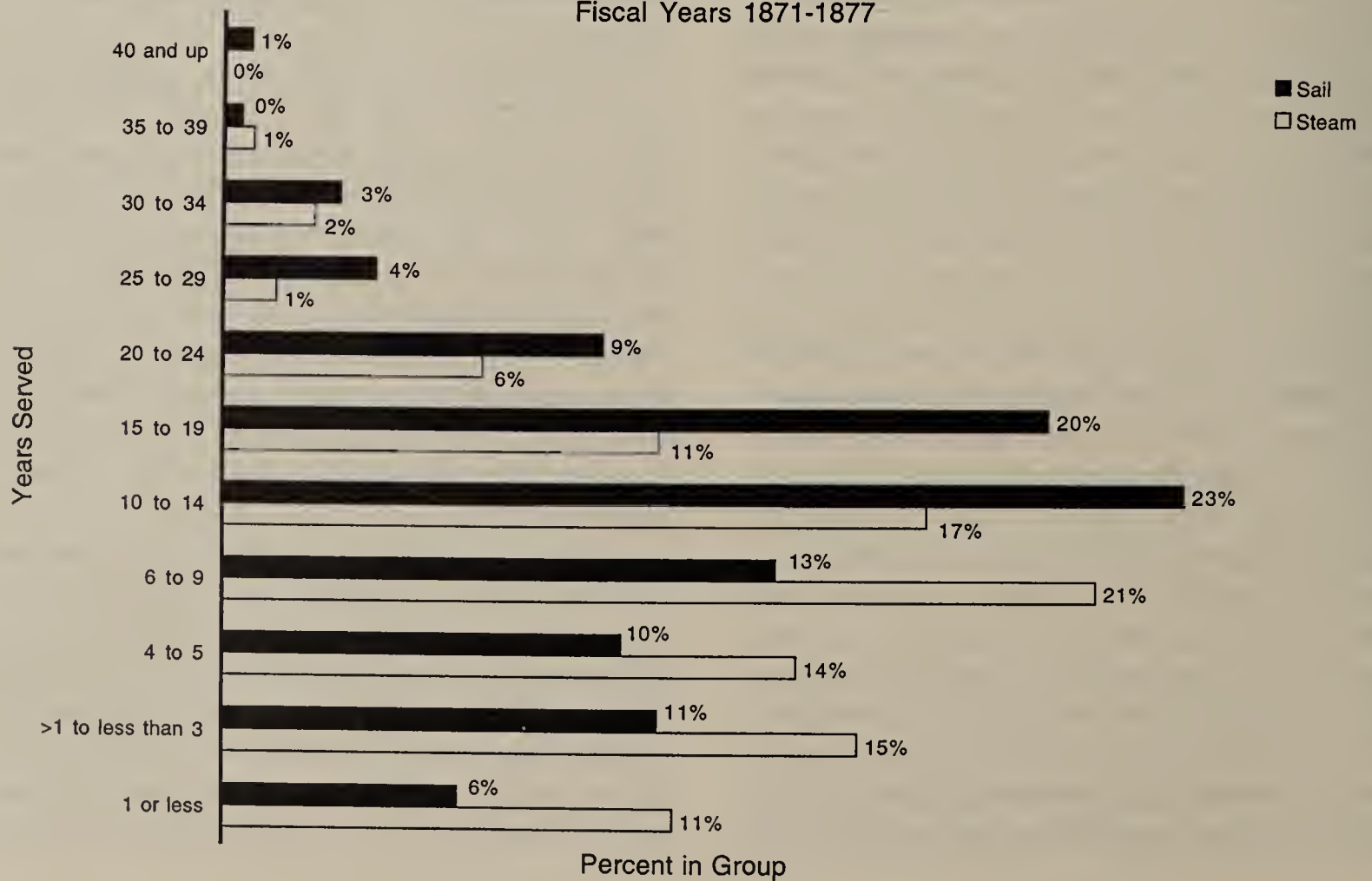


Figure Three
Years of Service Sail and Steam Mariners
Fiscal Years 1871-1877



hospital patients, statistical analysis revealed at least four major areas where statistically significant differences existed between sail and steam mariners: age, experience, region of birth, and injury patterns.

Sailors were nearly three years older on average than steamboat workers. The average age for sailing mariners was 32.13 years. The same figure for the steam mariners was 29.28 years.¹⁹ Sailors had served as seamen on American vessels longer than steam mariners, an average of 12.08 years, while steamboat mariners had logged an average of 9.10 years on American ships.²⁰

A graphic display of the distribution of ages and experience levels highlights more clearly than descriptive statistics the differences between sail and steam workers. Steamboat workers clustered much more in the younger age groups. Thirteen percent of steamboat workers were twenty years old or younger, while only three percent of the sailors fell into that age group. Forty-four percent were twenty-five or younger. Only twenty percent of sailors were twenty-five or younger. A similar pattern appears in experience levels. Steamboatmen were, in general, considerably less experienced than sailors. Modal values summarize the difference with particular clarity. The most common number of years of experience listed by steamboatmen was three years; for sailors it was ten years. Furthermore, a far greater percentage of relatively inexperienced mariners are found among the steamboatmen than among sailors.

The patterns of difference in age and experience found between steam and sail workers are also found (with slight exceptions) when looking at the different nativity groups discussed below. While statistically significant differences were found between the different regional groups in age and experience (differences that may be related to historical factors outside of the Great Lakes), the basic pattern of greater sail experience and age holds true for all nativity groupings. In some instances, the differences are quite startling. In the extreme case of German mariners, for example, while the average years of experience for steamboat workers was 4.52 years, for sailors, the average was 12.27 years.

Even in the case of the Irish, where we find the least differences between sail and steam workers, very clear differences can be seen in relative experience levels as a large group of the more experienced workers are found on sailing vessels. Irish steamboatmen had served an average of 11.85 years on American vessels while sailors had served an average of 13.16 years. Median and modal figures also emphasize differences between the groups. The median number of years served by Irish steamboatmen was ten years; for sailors the figure was 13.55 years. Modal figures are more striking. While nine was the most common number of years served listed by Irish steamboatmen, sailors most commonly listed an amazing eighteen years of American maritime service.²¹

Gjerset suggested that, at least in the case of Norwegians, ethnicity affected workplace preference. Evaluation of the Milwaukee patients showed that Gjerset was correct — and not just for Scandinavians.²² American mariners evidenced a nearly two-to-one preference for steam craft. Only 110 Americans receiving hospital permits worked on sail vessels, while 199 came from steamboats. The most striking difference, however, was found among Scandinavians, most of whom were Norwegians. While one hundred Scandinavians receiving permits listed a sailing vessel as their last workplace only fifteen listed steamboats. For the rest of the mariners listed in the hospital register, region of birth seems to have had little influence on the type of craft they were employed upon.

The lakes were a hazardous place for mariners, particularly during the cold and stormy months of the year. Accidents seemed, at least to Marine Hospital Service officials in Washington, to be more common on the Great Lakes than anywhere else in the country:

As the statistics of shipwrecks, & c., published by the Life-Saving Service, show an excessive proportion of disasters on the Great Lakes, so the statistics of the Marine Hospital Service show an excessive proportion of injuries treated in the District of the Great Lakes as compared with other districts, and with

Figure Four
Number of Sail and Steam Mariners by Birth Region
Fiscal Years 1871-1877

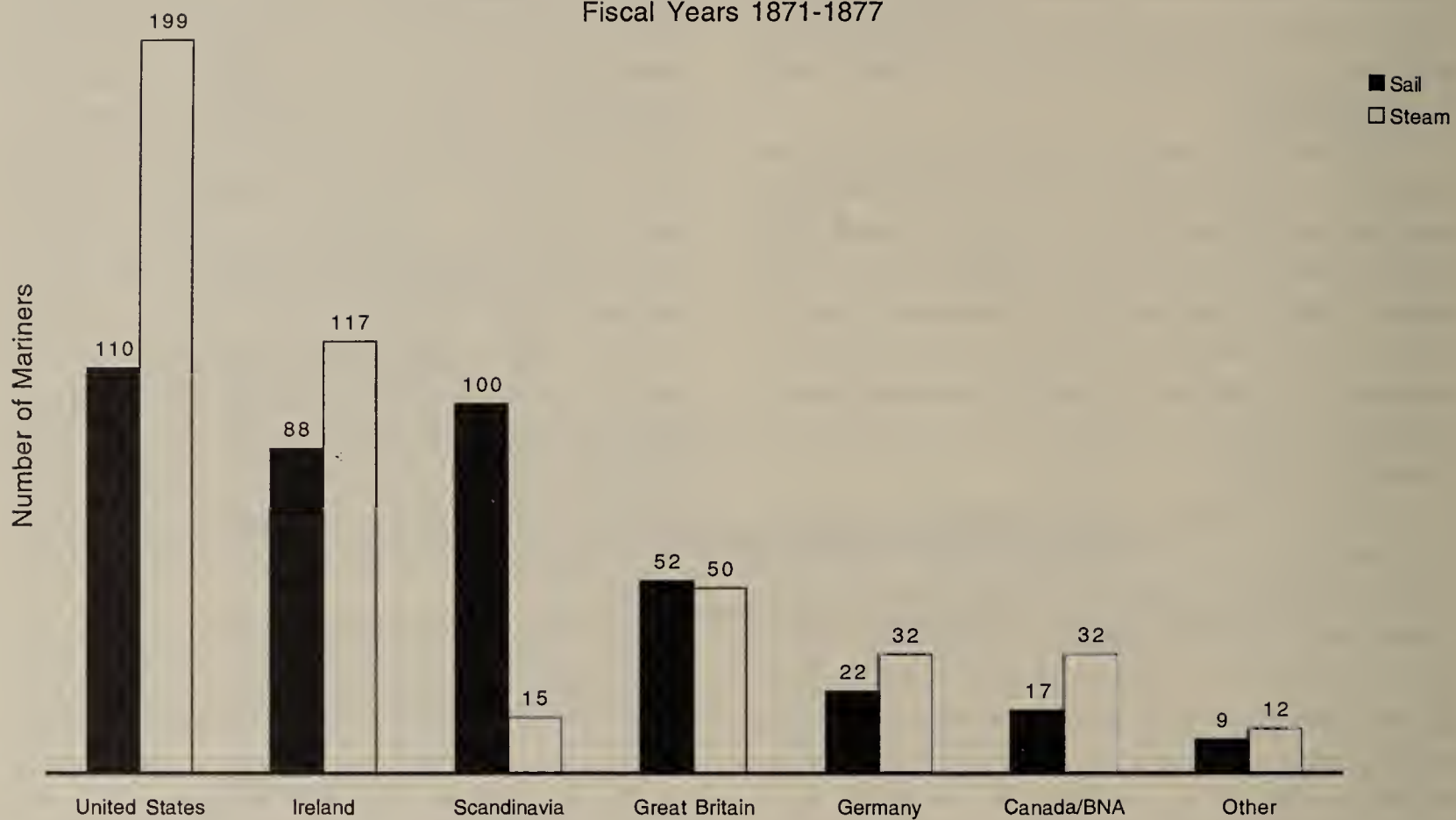
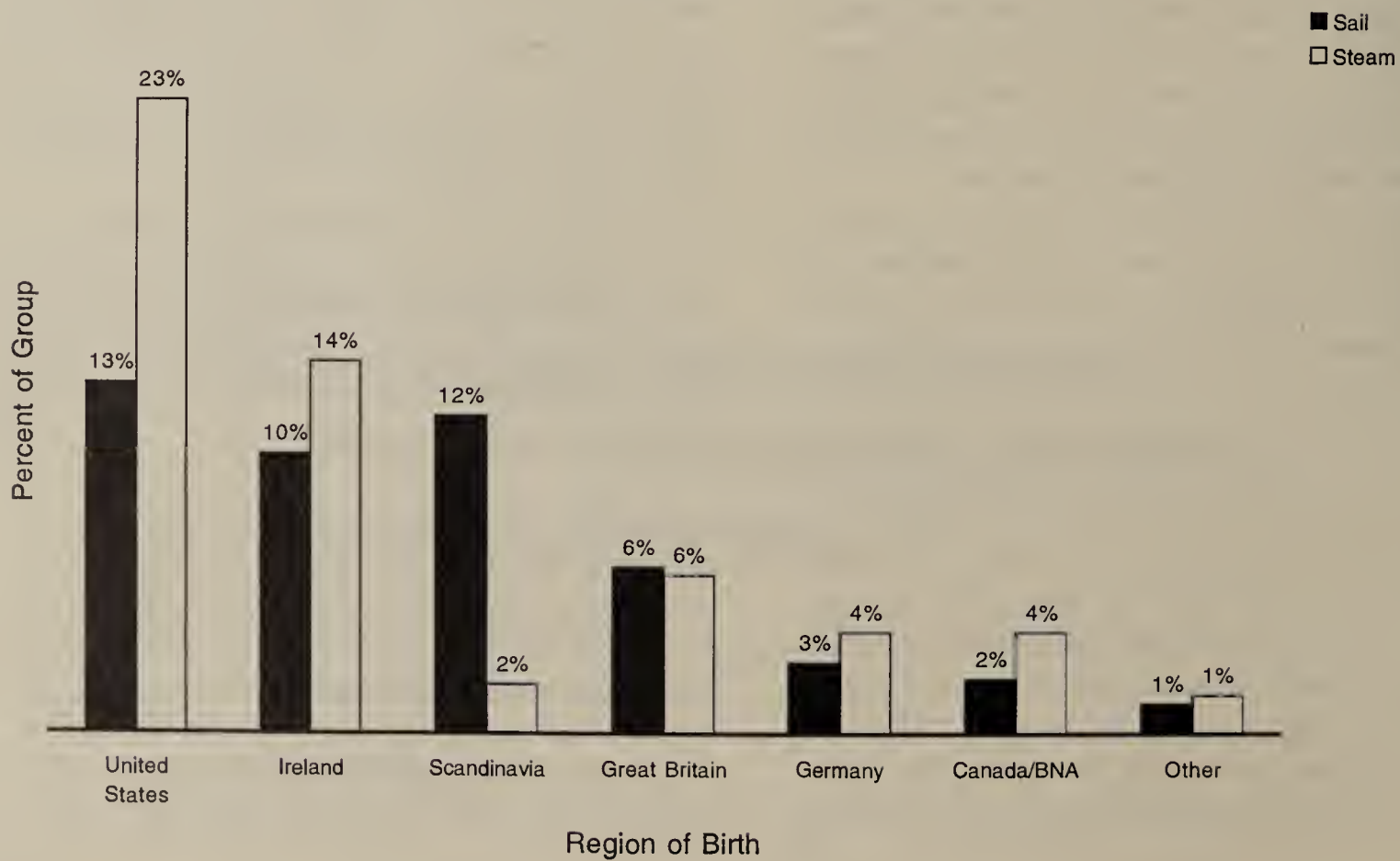


Figure Five
Percentage of Sail and Steam Mariners by Birth Region
Fiscal Years 1871-1877



*the number of cases of disease. About 19 per cent of all the cases treated in the District of the Great Lakes in 1874 and 1875 were injuries, while in no other district the proportion of injuries exceeded 13 per cent. It is also noticeable that the largest number of cases of injury were treated during the stormy season of the year.*²³

The injury proportion among the Milwaukee patients was about twenty-one percent. More research into monthly traffic levels is required to determine just how dangerous specific times of the year were for Great Lakes mariners. Shipwreck records kept by the State of Wisconsin, however, suggest strongly that the Lakes were deadly during the colder months of the year. Data on 580 Wisconsin shipwrecks indicate that over 60 percent were lost in the months of September through November. Of the 768 known shipwreck-related deaths recorded for Wisconsin, 652 occurred during the same three months. It is worth remembering that lake traffic tapered off in November and largely ended around 1 December, the rough date at which marine insurers annually suspended the underwriting of Great Lakes vessels until the following spring. A few steam vessels invariably remained in service, at least when ice conditions permitted, but it was a dangerous and unpleasant business.²⁴

Was sailing more dangerous than steamboat work? Rhetoric attributed to contemporary sailors by Hoagland and Larrowe suggests that true sailors felt that sailing vessel work was more physically challenging and more dangerous than steamboat work. Caution, however, is warranted here. Although sailors appear to be over-represented in the hospital, given the fact that Milwaukee catered to far more steamboat men than sailors in any given year, one cannot definitively state — based on data in the Milwaukee hospital register alone — that either workplace was the more hazardous. Such conclusions will require more economic and epidemiological research and analysis. The hospital data demonstrates, however, that sail and steam vessels offered *different* hazards. These differences show up in significantly different injury patterns.²⁵

While sail and steam mariners appear in the injury category in proportions relatively equal to their presence in the total hospital population, those entering from sailing vessels suffered a disproportionate number of the more serious injuries. For example, of the six amputations listed in the register, five were performed on patients from sailing vessels. Sailors also suffered proportionally more broken bones. Steamboatmen, on the other hand, suffered proportionally more bruises, sprains, and wounds. It is tempting to attribute the greater presence of serious injuries among sailors to sailing vessels' large booms and dangerous rigging. A more careful examination of workplace hazards is needed, however, in order to explain the specific causes of the different injury patterns. Whether sailors were really "iron men" compared to steamboat mariners remains an open question.

Of what broader significance is the data presented above? At minimum, for Great Lakes historians, the information preserved in the Milwaukee marine hospital register provides empirical baseline data about an important workforce as it moved toward industrialization. Although active in the 1870s, Great Lakes maritime commerce grew tremendously in the decades that followed. The pace of technological and organizational change was so rapid, yet so far from universal in immediate application, that by the turn of the century 500' steamers were sharing the lakes with hundreds of marginalized and rapidly decaying, but still active, sailing ships. Looking at changing demographic data (often on an individual level) and monitoring medical conditions like injury rates and types, historians can examine the surviving medical records of Great Lakes marine hospitals to evaluate the effects of industrialization and modern labor practices upon a large and important workforce. The data offer opportunities to identify groups of workers such as the Scandinavian sailors, many of whom resisted the technological and economic changes that swept the lakes in the final decades of the nineteenth century.²⁶

Figure Six
Number of Specific Injuries by Vessel Type
Fiscal Years 1871-1877

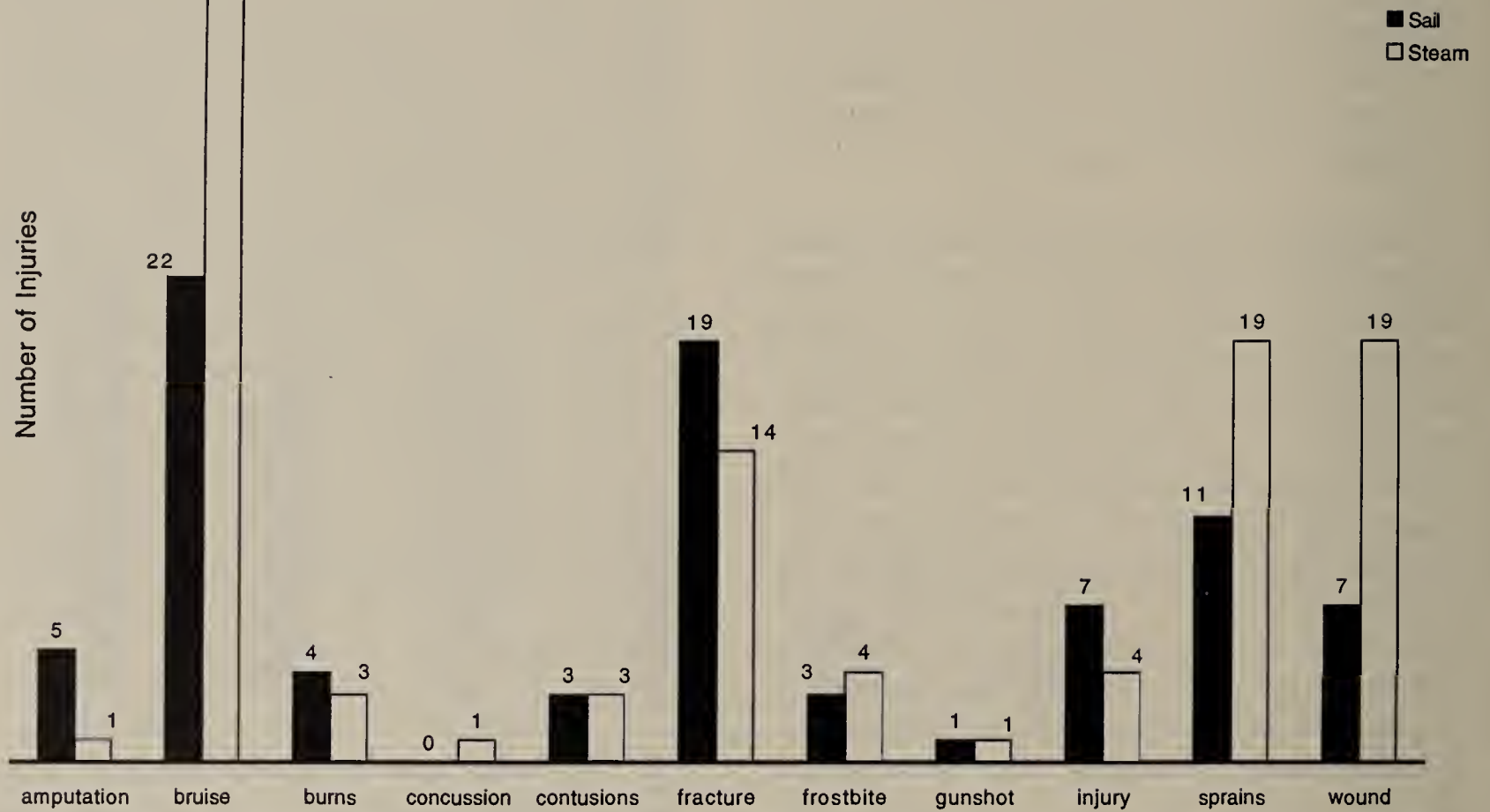
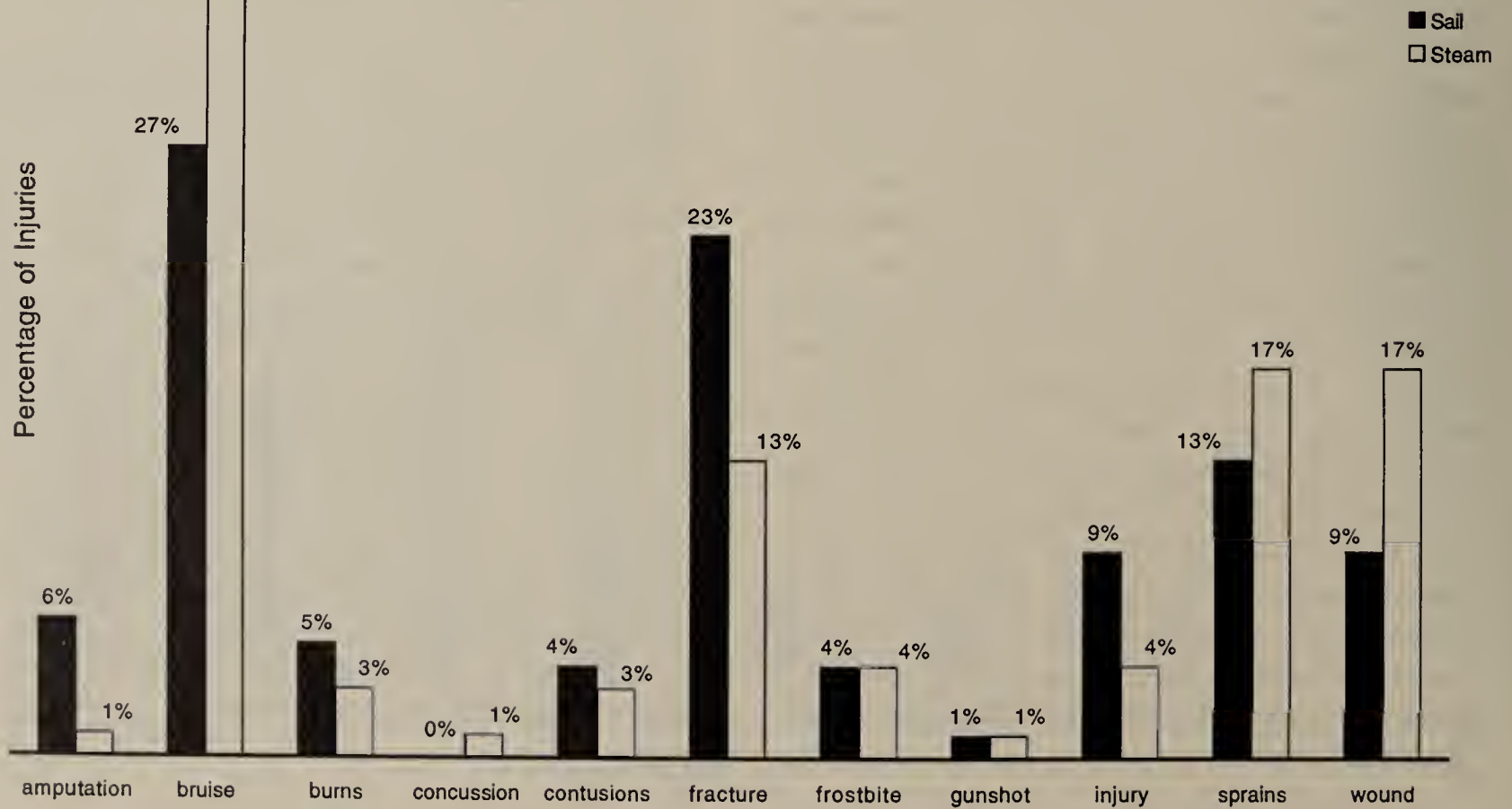


Figure Seven
Percentage of Specific Injuries by Vessel Type
Fiscal Years 1871-1877



What does this age, experience, nativity, and occupation data contribute to our knowledge of Great Lakes maritime life in the 1870s? Although the results presented here are exploratory in nature and must be interpreted cautiously, they add important empirical grounding to our basic understanding of the Great Lakes maritime social milieu during the age of sail, when new technologies and changing economies of scale were poised to supplant older forms of maritime enterprise. They confirm, for example, that differences between sail and steam workers emerged early on the Great Lakes — at least by the 1870s. These data provide new information about the ethnic makeup of the labor force and cast doubt upon Knut Gjerset's estimate that over half of the men serving on Lake Michigan sailing vessels at the beginning of the 1870s were Norwegian or Norwegian-American.²⁷

These data also give us reason to reconsider broader factors of culture, ethnicity, and geography in Great Lakes maritime history.²⁸ Although definitive answers about the deeper social and cultural significance of the patterns found in the patient records cannot be made on the basis of the hospital records alone, cautious speculation is warranted.

To begin with, the possible cultural differences between steam and sail workers, which seem most apparent in the Scandinavian mariners' antipathy to steam, may have broader applicability. The Milwaukee hospital register reveals similar preferences among some of the American mariners. For example (although this difference may not be statistically significant given the small number of cases preserved in the register), of eighteen native New England mariners — a traditional maritime region of the country — fourteen were serving on sailing craft, and only four worked on steam vessels. Local or province level data is not preserved for the immigrant mariners. Patient records, however, when supplemented by further research may reveal similar regional or local patterns among ethnic groups. German-born sail and steam mariners, who exhibited such a remarkable difference in years of experience as seamen on American ships, clearly deserve closer examina-

tion. Mariners from the other regional groups invite closer birthplace analysis as well.

Ultimately, we may find that for the Great Lakes in the 1870s, where and in what capacity a seaman served may have depended as much or more on the kind of community or region he came from than his particular nationality. It could be, as Hoagland, Larrowe, and Gjerset indirectly suggested, that a salt water sailor from Massachusetts would have had more in common with a schooner man from Bremen (or a Norwegian mariner) than with his own countryman, the steamboat worker from Brooklyn.

Were Great Lakes mariners different from other Midwestern laboring groups? The idea that mariners were somehow an exceptional group of laborers has been challenged in recent years by a group of scholars studying the ports of Atlantic Canada. They posit that nineteenth and early twentieth century sailors differed little from laborers who worked ashore.²⁹ This conclusion, while still debatable in the Canadian context, has yet to be tested for the Great Lakes. On one basic level — the desire for new opportunities and a better life — this proposition seems true.

Tens of thousands of opportunity seekers, both American and foreign, filled the Midwest in the mid- and late nineteenth century. The mariners of the Great Lakes, as economic and social opportunists, may have differed little from land-based workers. For maritime people — those with previous seagoing experience and cultural traditions — the Lakes bespoke opportunities unavailable to, or perhaps unrecognized by, land-bound workers. This maritime exceptionalism can be seen in the different ethnic mixes that separate the general Great Lakes population from the group of mariners who received hospital permits. Like the Milwaukee marine hospital patients, the major cities of the Great Lakes region had a high percentage of foreign persons among their respective populations. In 1870, for example, Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, and Cleveland all had populations that were between forty and fifty percent of foreign origin. The immigrant mix found on land, however, was far different from that found among the marine hospital patients. While Germans were the most numerous immigrant group found in these cities,

making up between 35.7 percent (Detroit) and 66.9 percent (Milwaukee) of the immigrant populations, they only made up 9.6 percent of the foreign marine hospital patients in Milwaukee. Scandinavians, who made up 22.2 percent of all foreign marine hospital patients in Milwaukee, had a negligible presence in the major Great Lakes port cities. Even in Chicago, which had by far the largest population of Scandinavians, the group amounted to less than ten percent of the local immigrant population.³⁰ Clearly, for maritime people, the American Great Lakes region offered a unique set of economic opportunities.

Norwegian historian Knut Gjerset eloquently sketched out the odyssey of the "typical" Norwegian sailor. It is a journey, however, that probably fits the experience or at least the expectations of a great many of the Gilded Age mariners who manned ships in the American Midwest:

But it is natural that a people so prominently occupied in seafaring should choose this pursuit also in the New World, wherever a suitable opportunity could be found.... In coming from Norway he would arrive in New York and would proceed by way of Buffalo and the lakes to Chicago; or he would pass through Canada to Grand Haven on Lake Michigan, and cross that lake to Milwaukee. In either case the Great Lakes were lying between him and his final destination.... Here he found the great center of America teeming with young and ambitious life, throbbing with an almost riotous growth.... Here the sailor boy found that he could earn money at his accustomed work, and that he could receive wages far beyond anything which he could hope for at home....³¹

The speculations and research questions laid out in the final segments of this essay are, at least in part, testable using marine hospital patient records. While this article is intended

only as an introductory effort to incorporate patient records in maritime history and is limited to group level analysis, the data from the Milwaukee marine hospital register offers rich individual level information about hundreds of mariners. Combining specific workplace data with demographic characteristics and some temporal career boundaries, patient records can help historians integrate mariners' working lives on the water with the larger shore based communities from which they came.³²

Thousands of individual hospital records exist for mariners who worked in different regions of the country during the second half of the nineteenth century. Linked with other available sources of data including ship documents, census schedules, city directories, immigration records and court records (just to name a few of the potential sources), historians can develop new, more nuanced, understandings of large groups of laboring people who served in critical areas of the American national and regional economies during the second half of the nineteenth century.³³



John Odin Jensen began his maritime career at the age of nine, assisting his father, a commercial fisherman in Alaska. He holds a Masters degree in maritime history and nautical archaeology from East Carolina University and works with the State Historical Society of Wisconsin's Program in Underwater Archaeology. A Ph.D. candidate in history at Carnegie Mellon University, Jensen's dissertation project is a study of hospital care for mariners in nineteenth century America. This is his second article on the history of The Great Lakes to appear in The American Neptune.

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Notes

1. The standard history of the United States Public Health Service remains that of Ralph Chester Williams, *The United States Public Health Service: 1789–1950* (Washington DC: Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service, 1951). A concise sociological discussion of the Marine Hospital Service can be found in Robert Straus, *Medical Care for Seamen: The Origin of the Public Medical Service in the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950). A good discussion of Marine Hospital Legislation is found in Henry W. Farnum, *Chapters in the History of Social Legislation in the United States to 1860* (Washington DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1938).
2. Three prominent examples of this genre include Guenter B. Risse, *Hospital Life in Enlightenment Scotland: Care and Teaching at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); John Harley Warner, *The Therapeutic Perspective: Medical Practice, Knowledge, and Identity in America, 1820–1885* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Martin S. Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering: Pain, Professionalism, and Anaesthesia in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
3. Guenter B. Risse, "Hospital History: New Sources and Methods," *Problems and Methods in the History of Medicine*, Andrew Wear and Roy Porter eds. (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 176–178.
4. Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Care of Strangers: The Rise of America's Hospital System* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 22–32; Risse "Hospital History," 179, 182.
5. Katherine Lynch and Dennis Willigan, *Sources and Methods of Historical Demography* (Academic Press: New York, 1982), 149–153. Some historians have used institutional records in studying maritime history. See Ira Dye, "Physical and Social Profiles of Early American Seafarers, 1812–1815," *Jack Tar in History: Essays in Maritime Life and Labour*, Colin Howell and Richard Twomey eds. (Fredrickton: Acadiensis Press, 1991), 220–235. Great Britain also had a health insurance scheme for mariners. Christopher J. French in "Seamen's Sixpences and Eighteenth-Century Shipping Records: An Exercise in Shipping Reconstruction," *International Journal of Maritime History* 7 (1995): 57–81, uses records of payments made by ship masters into the health fund to reconstruct shipping patterns.
6. *Ninth Census of the United States* (1870), Volume 3. Table XVIII. Treasury Department; *Annual Report of the Supervising Surgeon-General of the Marine Hospital Service for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1874* (Washington DC, 1875), XXXVIII.
7. John G. B. Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy, 1789–1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), 542–543; *Annual Report of Foreign Commerce and Navigation 1871* (Washington DC, 1872), 756; *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1881* (Washington DC, 1882), 140.
8. *Annual Report of Foreign Commerce and Navigation 1871*, 754–756. Figures for the Great Lakes are based on the following customs districts: Oswego, NY; Buffalo Creek, NY; Cape Vincent, NY; Dunkirk, NY; Erie, PA; Cuyahoga, OH; Sandusky, OH; Detroit, MI; Huron, MI; Superior, MI; Michigan, MI; Chicago, IL; Milwaukee, WI. Coastal figures do not include licensed river craft and major river ports.
9. Figures compiled from the *Annual Reports of Foreign Commerce and Navigation*. They do not include the much smaller but still significant number of vessels clearing for Canadian ports. The most comprehensive analysis of the port of Milwaukee during this period is found in William Edward Derby, "A History of the Port of Milwaukee — 1835–1910" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1963), 280–346.
10. Figures based upon the *Annual Reports of Foreign Commerce and Navigation*.
11. Henry Elmer Hoagland, "Wage Bargaining on the Vessels of the Great Lakes," *University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences* 4 (1917): 79, 52.
12. Hoagland, "Wage Bargaining," 13, 17, 31, 47; Charles

- P. Larowe in *Maritime Labor Relations on the Great Lakes* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959), 13.
13. Larowe, *Maritime Labor Relations*, 13.
 14. Knut Gjerset, *Norwegian Sailors on the Great Lakes: A Chapter in the History of American Inland Transportation* (Northfield, MN: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1928), 5, 10, 84–6. Lewis R. Fisher provides a international perspective on Norwegian maritime labor in “The Efficiency of Maritime Labour Markets in the Age of Sail: The Post-1850 Norwegian Experience,” *Research in Maritime History* 7 (1994), 111–140.
 15. Knut Gjerset, *Norwegian Sailors in American Waters: A Study in the History of Maritime Activity on the Eastern Seaboard* (Northfield, MN: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1933). Gjerset, who was also working within an older Progressive tradition, which judged immigrant groups on their potential fitness as future Americans. Scandinavians were considered “desirable” immigrants. Richmond Mayo-Smith’s influential *Emigration and Immigration: A Study in Social Science* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 4–10.
 16. Statistical significance is defined for this paper as any difference between two groups that has a less than 5 percent chance of occurring randomly.
 17. Nativity data was not recorded or was unreadable for 250 of the seamen. Most of the missing data reflects a period from late 1874 to late 1875 when nativity was only incidently recorded. Had this information been available, the overall nativity profile presented below is not likely to have differed much. There is no evidence that any particular groups were being selectively included or excluded in recording nativity.
 18. Patient registers for some of the inland river and coastal hospitals contain a great deal of data on the birthplaces of native-born sailors. Local level data was rarely recorded at Milwaukee after the 1873 fiscal year. Of the mariners born in the Midwest, seven were from Ohio, five from Michigan, and eight from Wisconsin.
 19. An unpaired two-tailed t-test produced a score of 5.22 which is statistically significant at a .0001 level.
 20. An unpaired two-tailed t-test produced a score of 6.015, which is statistically significant at the .0001 level.
 21. Steam $N=116$; Sail $N=84$.
 22. A chi-square test for independence was performed that compared region of birth with vessel type (sail or steam). The chi-square score of 97.84 (7 d.f.) established a difference in region of birth between sail and steam vessels that is statistically significant at the .0001 level. The Cramer’s V score was .306.
 23. Treasury Department. *Annual Report of the Supervising Surgeon General of the United States Marine Hospital Service for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1875* (Washington DC, 1876), 34.
 24. This data comes from the Wisconsin Shipwreck Inventory kept by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin — State Underwater Archeology Program; John B. Mansfield, *History of the Great Lakes* (Chicago: J. H. Beers, 1899), I:508–9.
 25. Hoagland “Wage Bargaining,” 16; Larowe, *Maritime Labor Relations*, 13. A chi-square test comparing the six categories of injuries that demonstrated the largest proportional difference between sail and steam mariners (injury, sprain, wound, bruise, fracture, and amputation) resulted in a chi-square statistic of 13.44, which, with five degrees of freedom, is significant at a .02 level.
 26. Three recent discussions of technological change on the Great Lakes during this period are John Jensen, “Oak Trees and Balance Sheets: James Davidson, Great Lakes Shipbuilder and Entrepreneur,” *American Neptune* 54 (1994), 99–113; Jerome K. Laurent, “Trade, Transport, and Technology: The American Great Lakes, 1866–1910,” *Journal of Transport History*, 3d ser., 1 (1983), 1–24; and Jay C. Martin, “The Grand Haven Rig: A Great Lakes Phenomenon,” *American Neptune* 51 (1991), 195–201. For recent work on the social effects of industrialization, see Eric Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada 1820–1914* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1989). Two useful discussions of methodology in maritime labor history are Eric W. Sager, “The Maritime History Group and the History of Seafaring Labour,” *Labour* 15 (1985), 165–172, and Malcolm Cooper, “Maritime Labour and Crew List Analysis: Problems, Prospects, Methodologies,” *Labour* 23 (1989), 179–194.
 27. Gjerset, *Norwegian Sailors on the Great Lakes*, 76.
 28. Literary scholar Victoria Brehm has made an excellent beginning in this area in “Refiguring a Literature of Place: The Economics of Great Lakes Maritime Literature” (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1992).
 29. During the 1980s, a body of work emerged that depicts sailors as distinctly unexceptional “working men who got wet.” See David Alexander, “Literacy among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863–1899,” in *Working Men Who Got Wet*, eds. Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (St. Johns: Maritime History Group, 1980), 1–33; Eric W. Sager and Lewis R. Fischer in *Shipping and Shipbuilding in Atlantic Canada 1820–1914* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1986).
 30. Population figures are taken from Justin B. Galford, “The Foreign Born and Urban Growth in the Great Lakes, 1850–1950: A Study of Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Milwaukee” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1957), 304–341.
 31. Gjerset, *Norwegian Sailors on the Great Lakes*, 3–4.
 32. Two recent books that place mariners within the context of land communities are Judith Fingard, *Jack In Port: Sailor Towns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982) and Eric Sager, *Seafaring Labour*, especially chapter eight, “Home to the Sea.”

33. The largest collection of marine hospital records is located at the National Archive in College Park, Maryland in Record Group 90, Records of the United States Public Health Service. The regional branches of the National Archives also contain scattered collections of marine hospital material. For example, some of the records of the US Marine Hospital at Cleveland are located at the Regional Archives in Chicago. Some material like the Milwaukee permit register may be held unlisted in other record groups. The Milwaukee Register was originally held in Record Group 41. Other registers and records are held by various muse-

ums and archives. For example, the Wisconsin Maritime Museum of Manitowoc holds a small but interesting selection of marine hospital registers for Manitowoc. For an excellent recent example of record linkage during the colonial era see Vince Walsh, "Recruitment and Promotion: The Merchant Fleet of Salem, Massachusetts, 1670-1765," *Research in Maritime History* 7 (1995): 27-47. The unusual mobility of the nineteenth century Great Lakes population renders record-linkage studies more complex than those for the colonial era.



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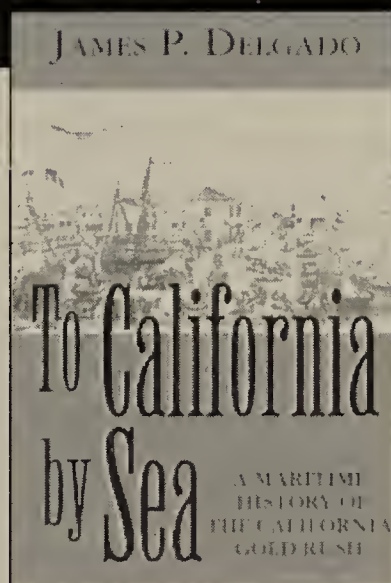
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# News

## MARITIME MASTERS

The Netherlands Maritime Museum in Amsterdam is currently exhibiting over one hundred unique drawings that depict a varied image of shipping in the time of the Dutch Republic, ca. 1600–1800. Because of their fragility, these drawings are rarely displayed. The exhibit is organized around subjects such as “Dutchmen and the Oceans,” “Fishing the Seas,” “War at Sea,” and “Feast and Decoration,” and includes works by Willem van de Velde, Ludolf Backhuysen, and Abraham Stork. The exhibit runs through 30 June 1997.



## CONTEMPORARY CRUISE LINERS

The Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Rhode Island, has opened an exhibit of photographic images of modern cruise liners. “Sun Ships: Photographs by Barry M. Winiker” includes images of ships owned by, among others, Norwegian Caribbean and Carnival Cruise Lines.



## WRECKS AND RESCUES

The Independence Seaport Museum has opened an exhibition focusing on the volunteer responses to the hazards of navigation along the 127-mile long New Jersey coast. These efforts resulted in the formation of the US Life Saving Service.



## CONFERENCE ON JEWISH DIASPORA

The John Carter Brown Library is organizing a conference entitled “The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West: 1450 to the Revolutions for Independence in the Americas.” The conference, to be held 15 to 18 June 1997, will consider numerous questions related to the experience of Jews in the New World, and will feature papers by over forty-five scholars from around the world. For more information, contact the library at (401) 863-2725.



# Readers' Forum

## MOFFETT'S DISASTROUS DIRIGIBLES

The following comments relate to the article “William A. Moffett and his ‘Disastrous Dirigibles’ in the Summer 1996 issue [Vol. 56, No. 3].

The article states that “the six other nations that once built dirigibles had abandoned them” at the time of the USS *Akron*'s loss (page 233). This is incorrect. The *Graf Zeppelin* was making scheduled flights between Germany and South America at the time (Hugo Eckener, *My Zep-*

*pelins* (London: Putnam & Co., 1958; 115).

On the same page, it is stated that *Akron* was lost because “her frame [was] twisted by opposing aerodynamic forces.” The exact facts of her loss are not known, but the most likely possibility is that she lost altitude control and flew into the sea. This may have resulted from inaccurate readings from her barometric altimeter caused by the low pressure of the storm. As Admiral Rosendahl commented, “never was a non-barometric altimeter more desperately needed than



during the *Akron's* last journey" (Quoted in Douglas H. Robinson, *Giants in the Sky* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), 238).

Both of the photos of the *Akron* accompanying the article are miscaptioned. The picture on page 228 is actually a much reproduced photo of her sister ship, the USS *Macon*. The one on page 229 is the USS *Los Angeles*, easily recognizable by her large gondola and external engine cars.

PETER ANSOFF  
Alexandria, Virginia

#### PROFESSOR COLETTA REPLIES:

The readers of your fine periodical deserve to know that I erred and that Mr. Ansoff was kind enough to provide corrections.

Mr. Ansoff is correct in stating that "the exact facts of the *Akron's* loss are not known," and in mentioning the lack of an altimeter that could measure pressure. All my notes on Moffett were burned in a disastrous fire, but I remember that a graduate student studied US Weather Bureau reports and concluded not too long after von Karman joined the Goodyear people as an adviser that huge air masses sailing in opposite directions had collided right over the *Akron*. I

believe that this is in a biography of von Karman.



I was quite interested in the article "William A. Moffett and his Disastrous Dirigibles." Having seen the *Shenandoah* when she flew up the Maine Coast on her way to Bar Harbor in the early 1920s, and the *Hindenburg* in 1936-37, I have always been interested in airships.

On pages 231-2, the Italian warship *Italia* is spoken of as being destroyed in Norway. Actually, it was probably intended as "north of Norway," since it crashed on the Arctic ice between the North Pole and Spitzbergen. Since the ice floe was continually moving, it was difficult to keep the location spotted!

General Nobile's *My Polar Flights* goes into great detail about the flight and the events after the crash. Quite a lot of politics were involved, especially after the failure of the expedition.

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## Document

# The Loss of the HMS *Victoria*, 1893

SUBMITTED BY J. E. ROBERTS

**O**n the warm, sunny Mediterranean afternoon of 22 June 1893, HMS *Victoria*, leading a column of warships on peacetime maneuvers, was rammed in the starboard bow by HMS *Camperdown*, the leading vessel in a parallel column. She sank with the loss of over 350 men. This tragedy was witnessed by a twenty-three-year-old engineer, George Crichton, one of the new class of naval officers then serving in HMS *Sans Pariel*, a sister ship of *Victoria*. The incident is related in a letter to his father, Edward Owen Crichton, Engineer, RN, and is published through the kindness of Mrs. Virginia Denton of *Victoria*, British Columbia. By one of those frightening coincidences of fate, the letter tells of young George's own death twenty-four years later in the service of his King and country.



HMS *Sans Pariel*  
Tripoli, Asiatic Turkey  
23rd June/93

My dearest Father,

It is with an awful feeling of depression and all too vivid memory of a sickening and blood-curdling sight that I sit down to write for you and others what still almost appears to me to be nothing more than a hideous nightmare. I refer of course, to the total loss of the *Victoria* and over

three hundred of her complement, which bare facts, of course, you must have learnt already by telegram and possibly more by newspaper, ere this has reached you. But I will try to give you a description of the terrible catastrophe as I saw it with my own eyes and as I know I shall see it as long as any memory is left me.

**Y**esterday afternoon, (one of my watches off) I was on the upper deck watching the movements of the fleet some 8 or 10 miles off the coast near Tripoli, which is about 40 miles north of Beyruit, on the Syrian Coast: it was about 3:30 p.m. when we had just passed Tripoli in 2 columns of "single line ahead," going about 8 knots, the *Victoria* with Vice-Admiral Tryon's flag flying, leading one line and the *Camperdown* with Rear-Admiral Markham's line, when a signal being hoisted on the *Victoria*, she and the *Camperdown* being 6 cables apart only, proceeded to turn inwards and toward each other, and had they persisted in their course, would in all probability have collided broadside to broadside with comparatively little damage to either, but the *Camperdown* with the hope, evidentially, of avoiding any collision at all, proceeded to go full speed astern, which proved fatal, for she turned sharply 1/2 round, and before the engines had neutralized her speed ahead, she also rammed the *Victoria* at 3:36 p.m. just forward of the turret containing the 110 ton guns, cutting right into her beyond the middle line and from keel to forecastle deck. In fact, you could see the *Camperdown's* scroll-work on her





bow beyond the turret and above the *Victoria's* forecastle deck.

Admiral Markham would have kept the *Camperdown* where she was to prevent the enormous inrush of water, at least until all the

*Victoria's* water-tight doors had been shut, but either Admiral Tryon lost his head or did not grasp the gravity of the situation altogether, for he signaled to Admiral Markham to disengage his ship, which he accordingly did and from that



*The American Neptune*



moment to 3:49 p.m. when the last of her was seen, she started to go down, at first slowly, and steadily, but finally very quickly.

Of course the first movement on the part of every other ship was to begin to lower her boats, when they saw her settling down, but Admiral Tryon, even then appeared to think his ship safe, for he made the signal, "Do not send boats till ordered," which of course had to be obeyed. Then he began the most awful and harrowing part of the spectacle, the very thought of which makes me feel sick *now*. Her stern was towards the shore and at first she only appeared to be slowly settling down stem first, the water being flush with the forecastle, but very soon the list on the side where she had been struck increased, but before it had become very bad, she was seen to be turning toward the shore (about 6 miles off) and steaming slowly toward it, the Admiral apparently intending to beach her; but this I feel sure, must have hastened the end by driving the water into her and probably bursting her transverse bulkheads, for from that moment, the list rapidly increased, until she turned bottom upwards and went down stem first in about 80 fathoms of water at 3:49 p.m. 13 minutes only after the moment she had been struck.

About one minute before the last of her was seen, she began to hoist the signal, "Send boats to —" but though this was evidently "Send boats to save us," it was never completed, though the signalman was seen to go down with his hands on the signal halliards as she actually went down with this unfinished signal flying at her main. Just before this, however, the word, "Every man for himself," had evidently been passed, for crowds of men began to strip and dive off the port side, the ship lying right over on the starboard side, where she had been struck. The whole of the port after side and the after part of the keel showing and toward us. Some of these men tried to slide down the ship's side and although some managed to do so without serious injury, a large number had their flesh torn into ribbons by the edges of the plates, the various projections and the barnacles, while others were stunned or had their limbs broken by

the torpedo booms, etc. But the most terrible deaths of all, at least of those that were visible (for I hardly care to think of the fate of those boxed up below) were those met by some of the men who dived right off the stern in the hopes of falling clear of the ship, for a large number of these fell on the blades of the port propeller which was revolving at a terrific speed in the air. I saw two poor fellows fall on this, tossed up again like footballs and cut to pieces, and then I could look no more or I would have been ill. A large number of those even who at first cleared the port propeller were drawn in the by vortices formed by the starboard propeller which was also revolving in the water and cut to pieces by it, some of these being saved alive afterwards with their arms and legs cut off; though I think these have all died since and I hope so for their own poor sakes.

A large number of those who could not get far enough away from the sinking ship in time, were sucked down with her. Some of these came up again and were saved and some saved themselves while the *Camperdown* was embedded in the *Victoria*, by jumping on board of her, but those were few, for the majority of those on the forecastle must have been killed directly by the entrance of the bow and huge fragments and splinters it threw up as it entered with that sickening crash, the sound of which I shall never forget. As it happened too, being Thursday afternoon, "make and mend clothes" had been given to the hands and a large number were lying forward both above and between decks asleep, utterly unconscious up to the moment of the crash, so the shock alone must have killed some. Those who jumped on board the *Camperdown* would probably have been severely punished had the *Victoria* been saved as they had no right to desert their ship until the order was given, but as it is, I don't think much will be said about it, especially as so few did so. With the exception of these, the behaviour of the officers and crew was magnificent, and worth of all the traditions of British pluck and coolness.

Directly the crash came, "Collision Quarters" was sounded off and every man went to his station and did what he could to avert the catastrophe without a murmur, and so they remained



until the last hope of saving that ship finally disappeared, leaving nothing but a thin column of smoke and a seething bubbling patch of water with masses of wreckage and clinging men, to mark the spot where one of our finest battleships had floated intact but 13 minutes before. The agonized and piercing shriek of those who could not swim and of those who could and yet were being drawn down, at last were heard and then all was still. We looked into each other's faces which were blanched and rigid and we knew we had seen and heard that which could never be effaced from our memories as long as we had life.

**T**he *Dreadnought*, being one of the nearer ships and having lowered two of her boats in spite of the negative signal, was first on the scene, picking up those who could not swim first. Of course, she had to wait some time after the *Victoria* had disappeared or her boats would have been drawn down with the swirl. Soon all the boats of the fleet were there and every man was saved that could possibly have been saved, but there is no doubt in anyone's mind that nearly every man in that ship could have been saved, had the Admiral decided to "Abandon Ship" at the very outset as he could have done.

How that signal, for the two lines to turn inwards, came to be made, nobody will be likely to know until the courts-martial come off, but either a mistake must have been made in the wording of the signal or Admiral Tryon himself made a huge bungle in imagining that 2 ships, each nearly 400 feet long and abreast of each other, could turn in a space of 6 cables or 1200 yards without colliding, and impossibly he must have known if he knew the turning length of his own ship and that of the *Camperdown*. In fact Admiral Markham evidently knew it, for it was some time before he would obey the signal, but finally of course was obliged to. Had the other ships followed their example, the result would have been the same in every case with each pair of ships, in fact directly the signal was given, Captain Wilson drew our Staff Commander's notice to it, and asked him what he thought it would inevitably mean, his answer being, "Un-

avoidable collision," long before the ships had begun to turn even. As it was, there were some more extremely narrow escapes from the same thing. About 2 minutes before the *Victoria* sank, poor old Admiral Tryon told the officers to save themselves, but he refused to be saved himself, and though his flag captain and Lieutenant tried to secure life-belts to him at the risk of their own lives, he clung to the rail of the bridge and calmly said, "I will not leave the ship." I think it is best so, for how could a man with his splendid career and service have borne the ignominy and disgrace, which assuredly would have been his had he survived.

Since writing the foregoing, it has been discovered through the flag ship Staff Commander, who was saved and who was with the Admiral to the last, that the Admiral knew he had made a mistake. It was pointed out to him by the Staff Commander that the two lines were only 6 cables apart and not 8 cables as he had intended to signal, but he was evidently too proud to negate his own signal and so said, "Never mind, keep it quiet," and just before the *Victoria* sank, he was heard to remark, "Well, it was all my fault." So, if he had lived, not only would have the loss of his ship to answer for but also the far greater loss over 300 lives, and so I say, it is better so. I believe they will try to bring in a case of temporary insanity on his behalf and as an excuse for his extraordinary behaviour.

**O**ne of the most extraordinary features of the affair was the case of commander Jellicoe, our late commander, and the late commander of the *Victoria*. He was in bed at the time of the collision, in a high state of fever, but directly he learnt what had happened, he rushed up on deck, and instead of trying to save himself as was natural in his condition, he climbed to the afterbridge, and for a long time tried to get the boats out by the hydraulic boat hoist, but there was no pressure, as the hydraulic pumping engine room forward had become flooded, so that no pressure could be maintained. He at last gave it up and reluctantly slid over the side, but would have inevitably been drowned in his weak state, though he was a strong swimmer,



had not a midshipman kept him afloat until a boat picked him up. He is now on board with a normal temperature and all but recovered owing to the reaction caused by the shock. He has a young brother on board, a midshipman, who with everyone else had given him up for lost, so you may guess his surprise and joy on finding him alive and even better than ever.

Only 28 out of the 60 officers were saved, all the Admiral's Staff being saved, except 2 Secretary's Clerks. The Captain, Commander, Staff Commander and all the Lieutenants except one were saved, all the doctors, 2 of the marine officers, the A. P. and only one Engineer (Rawlingson by name) were saved, also 4 midshipmen and one Clerk. I am glad I do not know how the Fleet Engineer, Senior Engineer and 3 Assistant Engineers met their deaths, though I can easily imagine the nature of them, for they were boxed up to the last moment in the Engine Room and the Stokeholds with two thirds of the stokers, driving the engines at full speed in that mad attempt to beach her. The last we saw of her, was both screws revolving furiously in the air, and it was by these that so many met an awful death. It was too late to pass the word to save themselves, so they must have died like rats in a trap, suffering the most awful agonies probably from scalding and being thrown about. Her starboard forward stokehold must have been flooded very quickly after the collision, for the point where the ram entered, is just about the position of the bunker where they would be using coal from and the water rushing down the shoot [chute] from this would flood the stokehold before they could have time to close the watertight door. I think that accounts a great deal for the heavy list she gradually assumed to starboard, together with the fact that the heavy 110 ton guns took charge and the turret swung round, also in that direction, and ultimately tore itself away from the ship just as she was sinking. The rapid sinking was also assisted by all the 12 6-inch guns which fell clean through the side of the ship as she was going. It was easy to see that the boiler burst just as she was going under, from the violent disturbance in the water and the fire on

the surface.

What brings all this the nearer to me, is that we are an exact counterpart of the *Victoria* and so can trace what happened the more accurately, but have no more time to go into details at present.

Just picture to yourself, a fine ship like that, in the broad light of day and in a perfectly fine day and smooth water, in peace time too, and with both ships doing their utmost to avoid the catastrophe, yet down she goes ignominiously, 13 minutes after she has been struck, and then ask yourself, what is a large naval engagement going to be like. Yet there is a bright side to it all, at least, it is not all of so dark a hue, for if our men are going to behave so gloriously and coolly in the face of a cold-blooded death which they must have felt utterly unnecessary and with nothing to spur them on to such behaviour but the mere sense of duty, ask yourself how those men will behave when they know they are fighting for their country and themselves and in the knowledge that if they do meet their death, it will have been a useful one as well as a noble one. I think you can safely answer those few miserable people who have nothing better to do than cry "Ichabod" whenever the grit of an Englishman is called into question.

What seemed the worst part of all, was that 13 other ships should stand close around without making one effort to save life and watch a wholesale butchery until it was too late to save more than half and all because one man was too late in smothering his pride and making the necessary signal.

Very few bodies have been recovered so far, and among them no officers. What there were, were buried here today with full Naval honours, among them the Fleet Paymaster, who died from his injuries during the night. Tonight a most impressive scene took place. Every ship's company was assembled on deck and the burial service having been read on each ship, were slowly fired a salute of 21 guns, then the Vice-Admiral's flag which we had been flying reversed, and at half mast (because we were sister ships) was slowly hauled down, while all the



bands played the "Admirals Salute" and the "Dead March." There will probably be funerals for days to come yet, as the bodies are found.

**S**o ends a most horrible tragedy, and one which I wish I had not witnessed, for it has completely unstrung me, mind and body.

The *Camperdown* did not come away Scot-free. In fact, at one time it seemed possible that she would follow the *Victoria* as her forecastle was all but awash, but they managed to confine the injury to the collision compartments and shut all the doors. Now they are gradually gaining on water and building a cofferdam around the bow so that they may be able to patch or plug up the enormous hole near the ram in the collision compartment, in order that she may steam back to Malta and be docked. Her ram itself is all twisted up and curved around until it is almost against the ship's side. It was brought up by the *Victoria*'s cable locker in which she has left all her scroll work.

Nobody knows what our future movements will be as Admiral Markham has telegraphed to the Admiralty and is now awaiting instructions, but I hardly think that our intended cruise will be carried out. Truly "in life we are in death" and only a few hours before, I had seen a large number of the *Victorias* at a dance given by the Beyruit English residents, laughing and chaffing

and all of course utterly unconscious of the horrible fate in store for them. I had spoken to several, too. Harding (who of course you knew when he was here) was among her number and I had asked after his wife, poor little woman. What must her feelings be now? And those also, of hundreds of others all over England, who know not whether their dear ones be alive or dead. I cannot write any more at present, my heart is too full. With fondest love to you and hoping all are well.

Your affectionate son,  
George E. A. Crichton



*Shortly after 12:10 a.m. on 1 June 1916, Engineer Commander George Edward Alan Crichton met his death at Jutland, in the manner foretold in the letter to his father. Crichton was serving in HMS Black Prince, when the old armored cruiser which had become separated from the main British squadron blundered into the German High Seas Fleet and was caught in the searchlights of the battleship Thuringen. In an action that lasted but a few minutes at near point blank range, the Black Prince was sunk with the loss of all hands.*

*Readers who wish more information should consult Admirals in Collision by Richard Hough, with several illustrations, published by Viking Press, New York, in 1959; you also may wish to read the article, "The Man Who Walked on Water," pages 19-24 of Geoffrey Regan's The Guinness book of Naval Blunders (Guinness Publishing: Great Britain, 1993). Illustrations are on pages 10, 20, 23, and 133 of this book.*



# Book Reviews

HUGH RICHARD SLOTTEN, *Patronage, Practice, and the Culture of American Science: Alexander Dallas Bache and the U.S. Coast Survey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Illustrations, bibliography, index. ISBN 521-43395-9. \$44.95.

Hugh Slotten presents a scholarly assessment of the early years of the US Coast Survey, a federal organization later known as the Coast and Geodetic Survey and today as the National Ocean Survey. Established in 1807, the Coast Survey undertook the first systematic charting of the coasts of the United States. Since accurate charts promoted safe navigation, this function directly supported America's oceanic and coastal commerce, a dominant interest of the United States in the antebellum era.

The first director of the Coast survey was the distinguished Swiss geodesist Ferdinand Hassler. Hassler committed the Coast Survey to the highest scientific standards of the day, but science, as Slotten demonstrates, inevitably is associated with the society and culture in which it operates. Hassler, a representative of aristocratic European scientific traditions, made little attempt to understand or to work within the American political system. Further, he lacked the leadership and managerial skills to operate a large scientific enterprise.

Hassler pursued his work professionally but slowly. It was not until 1815, eight years after the Survey's establishment, that he obtained from Europe the customized tools required by the Coast Survey. In 1815–1816, using many naval and army officers for his professional staff, he finally began the meticulous triangulation surveys upon which his charts were based. In 1815, however, a parsimonious Congress, faced with a need to find employment for military officers in peacetime, barred any civilian employees of the Survey. Hassler did not return to the organization he had founded until 1832, when Congress rescinded that restriction. For a

period of two years (1834–1836), over Hassler's bitter objections, the Survey, which previously reported to the Treasury Department, was placed under the navy. In the meantime, Hassler made steady progress in his coastal survey, but he refused to publish charts until the overall survey was completed, resulting in delays that increasingly were criticized by Congress. Hassler died in 1843, a frustrated man.

This monograph shows the dramatic success of Hassler's successor, Alexander Dallas Bache, in developing a troubled agency into the Government's largest single scientific enterprise over the years between 1843 and Bache's death in 1867. The new director was a man with wide contacts in the European and American scientific communities, who was as committed as Hassler to high quality science. Bache, however, understood the American political system, had notable political skills, and was far more effective than Hassler as an organizer and leader. He also benefitted from his superb family connections. He was a grandson of Benjamin Franklin, the nephew of George M. Dallas, who served as a prominent Democratic senator and then as President Polk's vice president, and the brother-in-law of Robert J. Walker, who, as Secretary of the Treasury in the Polk administration, was Bache's superior. As a graduate of West Point, Bache was well suited to deal with the Army and Navy that continued to provide many staff assistants to the Survey.

Slotten makes a major contribution by analyzing Bache's success within the context of American history and the sociology of science. Bache steadily produced results and continually reminded American political leaders of the utility of the Coast Survey's work to the nation's maritime industry. He seized upon the growth of the United States, including the acquisition of the Texas and Pacific Coasts, to justify the expansion of his agency. Yet, while relating his program to the needs of a democracy, he pursued profoundly elitist principles, for example, he was



deeply concerned by amateurism in American science. One of his major targets was the Navy's Matthew Fontaine Maury, a rival in pursuing oceanic studies, whose work Bache considered to be speculative and unsound. While preventing nonscientific interference in his work, the authoritarian Bache ran an organization that was closely disciplined and organized along strict hierarchical lines. In making appointments to his staff, he used nepotism and other forms of social preference to assure that loyal and worthy individuals were recruited for his Coast Survey.

Slotten also depicts the very broad approach taken by the Coast Survey under Bache's leadership. In addition to highly accurate charting, this organization understood hydrographic research, including the development of the tide tables and an important study of the Gulf Stream. Bache commissioned a great deal of astronomical work at American observatories in support of the cartographer's need to understand the curvature of the earth and to compute latitude and longitude with precision. Geomagnetic measurements allowed the Survey to produce charts showing the expected deviation of marine compasses. To varying extents, the Coast Survey also supported research in other ancillary sciences, including meteorology, marine geology, and natural history. In addition to its utilitarian purposes, Slotten associates Bache's agenda with the approach taken by the famous German scientist and explorer, Alexander Humboldt (1769–1859). Both Humboldt and Bache were convinced that systematic work in the environmental sciences would lead to a basic understanding of the global inter-relationships of all of these natural phenomena.

The net result of this activity was the creation of the first major American science project. As long as it had been true in Europe, the US Government at last became a major patron of science. Alexander Bache assured that the Coast Survey's patronage was widely distributed to competent investigators in order to influence the growth and professionalization of American science. In this process, Bache assured his own role as a dominant and authoritarian scientific leader.

This study focuses on the scientific process

and on testing concepts advanced by previous scholars interested in the culture of science. As a result, the volume does not present a vivid picture of the work of the Coast Survey or of the personalities of the individuals associated with Ferdinand Hassler and Alexander Bache. Nevertheless, Slotten's sophisticated analysis clearly shows the central role played by maritime requirements in shaping nineteenth century American science. Maritime historians will welcome this important contribution.

DEAN C. ALLARD

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SUZANNE J. STARK, *Female Tars: Women Aboard Ship in the Age of Sail* (Annapolis, US Naval Institute Press, 1996). 224 pages, 11 illustrations, notes, index. ISBN 1-5575-0738-4. \$25.95

MARGARET S. CREIGHTON AND LISA NORLING, EDS., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700–1920* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). 331 pages, illustrations, notes, index. Hardcover. ISBN 0-8018-5159-9. \$45.00. Paperback. ISBN 0-8018-5160-2. \$16.95.

These two recent books treat the general field of gender and seafaring in significantly different ways. Suzanne Stark's monograph focuses on women in Royal Navy ships, primarily in the eighteenth century, and sees them through the eyes of a historian. The volume edited by Creighton and Norling, sociological in nature, deals with the more general fields of gender analysis and gender theory; hence, it speaks of men as well as women. Its interest is in the formation of gender (as a social, not a physical, phenomenon) within seafaring communities both on land and at sea. Each book is excellent in its own way, but there is little overlap except when the two deal with issues such as what motivated women to disguise themselves as men. To that question, both books give essentially the same answer — to escape, in some cases, the



confinement of women's prescribed roles, or more basically, to earn a decent wage; however small the seaman's share in the economy, it far surpassed what was available to poor, single women.

*Female Tars* is more limited in content than its title shows. As I have indicated, it deals almost exclusively with women's lives in ships of the Royal Navy. Some of these women were "external" to the naval crews: prostitutes, seamen's wives, or wives of petty officers. Their lives are examined in the first two chapters. A third chapter describes "women in disguise in naval crews," while the fourth details one specific example, that of Mary Lacy (alias William Chandler), whose memoir furnishes a clear narrative of the how and why of cross dressing in the Royal Navy. Stark has researched her topic meticulously. She writes clearly. All in all, this is an admirable example of the historian's craft, and is well worth reading to round out one's picture of the Royal Navy at its height. The one group of women in sailing navies she does not treat is the officers' wives — a neglected topic that would repay telling, and one that Stark is well qualified to treat, should she wish to turn her next effort in that direction.

*Iron Men, Wooden Women* covers a much broader time span, over two centuries, and deals scarcely at all with Navy ships. Instead, we read here of women pirates, men and women in New England seafaring communities and in the whale fishery, the impact of gender definitions on African American sailors and men of color in British ships, and literary figures in the work of Joseph Conrad and in that of American women who chronicled the maritime scene. The contributors are ten in number, including Marcus Rediker on women pirates, Dianne Dugaw on transvestite heroines, Ruth Wallis Herndon on seamen's families in Rhode Island, Lisa Norling on women and the American whaling industry, Haskell Springer on captains' wives at sea, Margaret Creighton on gender and American whalemens, W. Jeffrey Bolster on African American seamen before 1860, Laura Tabili in racial divisions in British merchant ships in the early twentieth century, Lilian Nayder on Conrad, and Melody Graulich on American women's sea lit-

erature. Their interest is in the ways these people defined and/or were defined by gender roles, and how the peculiar nature of maritime society, especially on board ship, influenced those definitions and people's interpretations of them. The essays are uniformly well written and skillfully edited, but they are by no means light reading. They are the product of serious research and aimed at serious readers, perhaps those who are themselves pursuing research in related topics.

Both of these books can be recommended without reservation. Each is an excellent example of its genre, and taken together, they complement one another. Historians will feel more at home in Suzanne Stark's book, but will learn much that is of value from Creighton and Norling's. They will see how the historian has been influenced by the sociologist's research. Those whose primary interest is social science, on the other hand, will be in their element in *Iron Men, Wooden Women*, but they will find useful historical information in *Female Tars* to support and enhance their work. Students of maritime society should welcome both books to their libraries.

LINDA M. MALONEY

St. Cloud, Minnesota

DAVA SOBEL, *Longitude* (New York: Walker & Co., 1995). 184 pages, bibliography, index. Hardcover. ISBN 0-8027-1312-2. \$19.00.

This slim book offers an easy account of John Harrison's lengthy but eventually successful effort to build a chronometer that would keep time at sea, and his even more lengthy but eventually successful effort to win the £20,000 longitude prize. This story has been told many times, often in fuller detail than here, and countless visitors have read the label accompanying Harrison's four chronometers on display at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich.

As an accomplished science writer, Dava Sobel must know that developments in science and technology, like those in other areas of human endeavor, demand sophisticated analysis. Yet, she casts this account as a simple adventure story, and subtitles her book, "The True Story of



a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time." Believing that "a story that hails a hero must also hiss at a villain" (page 111), Sobel castigates the Reverend Nevil Maskelyne for having had the temerity to believe that the longitude problem would best be solved by astronomical rather than mechanical means. While Harrison deserves praise for his single-minded pursuit of his dreams, Maskelyne is scorned for having "enslaved" himself to his.

In Sobel's account, Harrison's achievement is especially noteworthy because he did it on his own. Perhaps it really is true, as Sobel tells us at least four times, that Harrison had no formal education and never served an apprenticeship with a watchmaker. However, after completing his first chronometer, he spent a long and profitable day with George Graham, the leading horologist in London. Several years later, having received fairly generous support from the Board of Longitude, Harrison moved to London and established good relations with scientists and other accomplished clockmakers. Although details are lacking, it is hard to imagine that he gained nothing from these interactions.

Apparently believing that the history of technology is inherently boring, Sobel has taken pains to humanize the story. This she does, however, not with important insights into character or situation, but with silly trivia: Sir Clowdisley Shovell was murdered by a woman who coveted his emerald ring, Edmond Halley and Peter the Great cavorted around the grounds of the Royal Observatory, and Nevil Maskelyne did not marry until he was fifty-two.

Two final quibbles are in order. A book about the design of mechanisms ought to have illustrations of those mechanisms. Second, the literary quotes at the head of chapters ought to have some obvious connection with the text that follows.

DEBORAH JEAN WARNER

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DIANE LEWIS, *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca, 1641–1795*. Monographs in International Studies, Southeast Asia series no. 96. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1995). xvi + 160 pages. Paperback. ISBN 0-89680-187-X. \$18.00.

The Dutch ruled Malacca for 154 years, from the time they seized the port city from the Portuguese in 1641 until they were ousted by the British in 1795. The interrelated themes of Dianne Lewis' book are the effects of Dutch East India Company policies on Malacca and the shifting political relations between VOC-governed Malacca and the Bugis and Malay powers bordering the Straits. This approach is not new, but Lewis provides a carefully detailed and solidly documented account of the arguments and policies of the Dutch company in the Malacca Straits. Trade and maritime matters are treated lightly in spite of their being central, one would think, to any operations in the region.

Malacca did not flourish under Dutch control. Once the Portuguese threat to their trade was removed, and fearful that a full-blown revival of Malacca's prosperity would steal business away from Batavia, the VOC administration was uninterested in developing the port city as anything more than a funnel for the export of tin from the hinterland and a way station for their ships passing through the Straits. In 1654, Malacca was banned from conducting its traditionally strong trade with China. For most of its existence as a VOC enclave, Malacca was a drain on the Company's resources. As early as the 1660s, no longer able to control the Indian trade, Batavia contemplated withdrawal from Malacca. Only in 1784, with their capture of Riau, did the VOC adopt a forward policy in the Straits area. The destruction of the Bugis sultanate at Riau was an effort to stem British expansion, which the VOC saw as a threat to their interest in Java and the eastern islands of the archipelago. Even in that instance, operations were directed from Batavia; Malacca remained of peripheral importance to the VOC. Less than fifteen years later, the Company collapsed. Although she does not argue the case, implicit in



Lewis' treatment is that the decline of the VOC itself was at least partly due to rivalries between Company officials in the two major ports under their control.

In her parallel theme, Lewis argues that, despite the apparent impotence of the VOC administration, we cannot dismiss the effects of the Dutch occupation of Malacca on the political structure of its Malay neighbors. "The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a fragmentation of the Malay political world, though it was an extremely gradual process, driven by external rather than internal circumstances" (page 131). Dutch presence at Malacca made it impossible for a powerful Malay state to develop in the area. Malacca played a significant part in the events which led to the collapse of Johor in 1718, and in preventing any meaningful reassertion of that state's power during the remainder of the eighteenth century.

Lewis' argument does not take any serious issue with the "standard" view, which goes all the way back to Stamford Raffles himself, that the heavy-handed mercantilist policies of the VOC were self-destructive. She has made good use of the main Dutch archives and of the factory records of the British East India Office. She has drawn to good effect from the works of Barbara and Leonard Andaya and other scholars, although the former's valuable *To Live as Brothers* (1992) and Reinout Vos' somewhat revisionist *Gentle Janus, Merchant Prince* (1994) apparently appeared too late for Lewis to take into consideration.

The book is a useful and detailed account of VOC-Malay-Bugis politics in Malacca and the Straits. It raises many questions about the conduct of trade and the maintenance of maritime power by the VOC. It could be strengthened by a description of the VOC's ships, their numbers, size, and armament. How many vessels-of-war did the VOC station in Malacca and Batavia to reinforce their mercantile policies? What form did Bugis resistance to the Dutch take? Details of the vessels used by the Bugis to control the Straits during their long drawn siege of Malacca in 1756-1758 would be very useful. How valuable in the VOC's scheme of things was the Selangor tin trade? Unfortunately, the conduct of

sea power and commerce which were, after all, bases of both VOC and Bugis presence in the Straits fall outside the scope of Lewis' book.

GERALD JORDAN

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ANTHONY DEANE, *Nelson's Favourite: HMS Agamemnon at War 1781-1809* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1996). 320 pages, illustrations, line drawings, notes, 7 appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. 9½" x 7". Cloth. ISBN 1-86176-001-9. £25.00.

Battle histories of individual ships-of-the-line smaller than first rate are so rare that one might be tempted to inquire, why the *Agamemnon*? In fact, there are several good reasons. This warship had a relatively successful and long career, and participated in several famous actions and events. However, as the title suggests, the real answer may lie with the fact that for a brief time, January 1793 – March 1796, she was commanded by Captain Horatio Nelson, the future victor of Trafalgar. One should not overlook that it is one of the first titles to be released by Chatham Publishing, a new company created by the original founders of Conway Maritime Press.

The text is divided into sixteen clearly delineated chapters, which are essentially arranged in chronological order. There are two major exceptions to this structure. The second chapter paints a vivid picture of life behind England's eighteenth century "wooden walls," complete with discussions of women sailors, homosexuality in the Royal Navy, and the draconian discipline system employed to keep sailors obedient. The fourth chapter is interrupted by a succinct yet excellent biography of Nelson, from his birth to his appointment to command this third rate ship.

Three chapters are devoted to her career under Nelson's command. Although she was a third rate, she was a fast sailer — many accounts credit her with being as fast as contemporary frigates. She proved to be the ideal command for an up-and-coming young captain of Nelson's stature and vision. On her decks, he developed



his dynamic leadership style, and refined the integral elements of what we now refer to as the "Nelson Touch." Nelson had every reason to be proud of his first major command. He was disappointed when he had to assume a new command after his promotion to Commodore.

The other chapters detail the balance of the ship's career. Her limited role in the mutiny of 1797, which severely distressed Nelson, is covered. She served under Nelson's command at both the Battle of Copenhagen (1801) — where her contribution was less than glorious — and again at Trafalgar (1805). In the latter action, she played a much more conspicuous role. She was present at the Battle of Santo Domingo (1806) and participated in the siege of Copenhagen in 1807. In all, she had served with distinction in the Mediterranean, as well as the North and South Atlantic. In 1809, she foundered in Malodonado Bay in Uruguay.

Deane has managed to fashion a highly readable account of this warship's career. For the most part, his well-laced asides do not interrupt the flow of the text. The illustrations and line drawings have been carefully selected, although it is unfortunate that some of the latter lose their continuity over the spine of the book. The writing is crisp, and the text is well organized. He has looked at an astounding number of primary and secondary sources, including the recent discovery of the *Agamemnon*'s final resting place. The seven appendices provide valuable data and samples of entries in her log, among other details. The glossary of naval terms will certainly be invaluable to readers unfamiliar with eighteenth century nautical terminology. For the most part, Deane successfully manages to concentrate his focus on the ship and avoid the temptation to succumb to Nelson's magnetic persona.

Overall, this is a well written and researched account of one of the Royal Navy's better known warships. It should be read by anyone with an interest in Nelson's leadership style and anyone with a strong interest in the naval history of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and ships-of-the-line. This release shows that the directors of Chatham have lost none of the flair that made Conway a mainstay of naval history publishing,

and offers an excellent harbinger for the future.

PETER K. H. MISPELKAMP

Pointe Claire, Quebec

CHRISTOPHER HIBBERT, *Nelson: A Personal History* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1994). xix + 472 pages, 33 illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth. ISBN 0-201-62457-5. \$30.00.

Admiral Horatio Nelson, the victor of the Battle of Trafalgar, is arguably England's best known naval hero. His legend is timeless, and our continuing fascination with him explains why he is popular with biographers. Christopher Hibbert is one of England's premier popular historians. As the title implies, Hibbert's *Nelson* is an attempt to put a human face on a man who appears to be larger than life.

Hibbert's book is divided into thirty-five chapters which trace Nelson's life from cradle to grave. The illustrations have been carefully selected, and the text bears the mark of diligent research. He has provided two very useful appendices. The first gives brief biographical updates on the fate of many people who played an even slightly significant role in Nelson's life. The second provides a relatively detailed chronology of Nelson's life. On the whole, the text is well written and flows very well.

Hibbert's main interest lies in the personality of his subject, warts and all. Consequentially, an incredible amount of space is devoted to the many people who played pivotal roles in Nelson's life. All of his faults — and some of his better traits — are covered in the text. While he was a very courageous officer and leader of men, Nelson was to many a scoundrel, with vainglorious and mercenary streaks. The latter charge seems a bit harsh, because in Nelson's day, RN officers were expected to — indeed, had to — supplement their income through prize money. Nelson had no compulsion about launching proceedings against any officer, especially superiors, who he felt had deprived him of fair compensation for prizes. Like his fellow officers, he also supplemented his income by smuggling



valuable commodities into England.

Nelson sought public fame and approbation, even if it came at the expense of his service. Hibbert cites numerous letters from the admiral criticizing the awarding of medals, promotions, and titles. He was so piqued by his superiors' unwillingness to reward his victories that he accepted a foreign title, Duke of Bronte, without receiving the requisite prior permission of the monarch. His determination to receive a peerage became evident early in his career. Once it was granted, he participated briefly in deliberations of the House of Lords. He took a strong dislike to public office when the government prevailed upon him and other RN officers in the House of Lords to press for acceptance of a peace treaty with Napoleon's France. His vanity led him to wear prominent decorations during the Battle of Trafalgar, decorations that made him the target of a sniper posted high in the masts of a French man-of-war.

At times, Nelson's less than secret affair with Lady Hamilton appears to be the chief focal point of the text. Hibbert's Nelson is a man quick to fall in love, and his few amorous encounters before Lady Hamilton bear this out. His marriage to Frances Herbert started out on a promising note, but quickly degenerated, on his part, into a loveless relationship. Although he first met Lady Hamilton in 1793, some five years were to pass before they became lovers. Their relationship soon became public knowledge, and Nelson did little to disavow it. Their illegitimate daughter never acknowledged Lady Hamilton as her mother.

Hibbert's concentration on the dark and personal side of Nelson's character is so intense that the admiral's redeeming qualities seem to all but disappear. His courage and ability to ignore pain are shortchanged. His leadership style is covered in a very desultory fashion. The only time that Hibbert offers even the briefest of tidbits on Nelson's strategic insights and tactics is in the prelude to Trafalgar. Readers will seek in vain for detailed information on technical data and insights on naval strategy and tactics of the period. In one battle, Hibbert notes that Nelson deliberately ordered his gun crews to demast a French warship. Most modern experts on British

naval tactics in this period maintain that this was contrary to RN gunnery tactics.

While this is a well written and detailed book, it is off balance. It certainly exposes all the admiral's human failings, but offers little insight into the ingredients of the Nelson Touch. Read it if you must, but do Nelson justice by balancing Hibbert's work with any of the more standard biographies available.

PETER K. H. MISPELKAMP

Pointe Claire, Quebec

DAVID C. HOLLY, *Chesapeake Steamboats: Vanished Fleet* (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1994). 308 pages, bibliographical references, index. ISBN 0-87033-455-7. \$29.95.

"I haunt the waterfront," writes David C. Holly, "and, in turn, the waterfront haunts me." He is referring, at the opening of this thorough, sympathetic study, to the shoreline of the Bay. What haunts him are the departed steamships. Their era began in 1813, notwithstanding the War of 1812, ironically thanks in good measure to foundrymen and engine builders from Great Britain.

For a century and a half, many a traveler took a craft (with freight carrying its own weight) on the likes of the Union, Weems, or Tolchester Line to or from Baltimore, Washington, DC, or Norfolk and points between, often via pier stops on the Patuxent, Potomac, or Rappahannock rivers. This way of life, inherently risky at any time and definitely dangerous during the Civil War, ended in 1963 when *Bay Belle*, last of the steamboats and an all steel, streamlined 300' four-decker, bowed out. *Bay Belle* and her brethren had been done in over time, as Holly very cogently recounts, by development of railroads and the motor car. Sometimes, these lines crossed, as in the turn-of-the-century development of Chesapeake Beach.

This Western Shore project was touted in brochures as "The Great Seaside Suburb of the National Capital, situated only thirty miles from Washington, and fifty-two miles from Balti-



more.” While doing full justice to the planning and financial ins and outs, which constituted more than one roller coaster ride, Holly, as elsewhere in his 308-page book, sketches the players with a deft hand. A sample follows:

*Ambrose C. Dunn... was a smooth-tongued rogue. A Georgian, he resigned as a cadet from West Point after he failed in mathematics and English in his first midterm examination. Three times he was either court-martialled or cashiered (or escaped by resignation) from the Confederate Army: once as a captain with the Georgia Volunteers (he fought at Bull Run), twice as a lieutenant-colonel with the Virginia Cavalry. Each time he managed to evade or falsify his past record and elude the inquirers. Sometime after the Civil War he managed to convince some investors of his expertise in railroad construction. Throughout the story of the early history of the development of Chesapeake Beach, Dunn proved to be a conniving hindrance...*

Author Holly, a naval officer in World War II and the Korean War, has taught at American University and Hampden-Sydney College. Three earlier books include *Exodus 1947*, the story of a down-at-the-heels Bay steamer spruced up for a historic run through the British blockade to Palestine. In *Chesapeake Steamboats*, Holly melds a full cargo of vignettes, engineering feats, and other engaging elements in a well-worked voyage through a major chunk of American history. Several detailed appendices superbly document engines (including keyed diagrams of the crosshead and vertical beam stalwarts), information sources, and the steamers themselves, one by one. Maps also are included. This is truly a labor of love, which closes with an epilogue that warns: “Generations coming on who have never experienced the romance and the warmth of that era cannot recreate it.”

With the passage of time, Holly adds: “I, too, must say farewell to the steamboats and the way of life they represented. My hope is that the era will be recorded as a colorful and visible thread

in the fabric of American history.”

A final salute, if he had a whistle with “a long, plaintive wail,” would be three longs and a short: “Goodbye, and good luck,” and the “good luck” would be dedicated “to those who celebrate the era and wish its memory well.”

ELI FLAM

Editor, *Potomac Review*  
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ERIC MILLS, *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War* (Centreville, MD: Tideville Publishers, 1996). 315 pages, 92 illustrations, 5 maps, bibliography, notes, index. ISBN 0-87033-479-4. \$29.95.

Eric Mills has created what he sought on the bookshelves but could not find — a treatise focusing on the Chesapeake Bay as the setting for the great events of the Civil War. The book that he has written presents a rich panorama of this history, when the Bay itself and the tidewater country of Maryland and Virginia became the strategic crossroads and the point of collision between North and South.

The book sweeps through this dramatic and bloody history with zest and excitement. Mills’ style, at once folksy and narrative, carries the reader through a page-turning experience. His selection of the geographic limits seem rational. Most importantly, the underlying research is impressive.

The reader finds himself engaged in the themes of the war filtered through Mills’ intimate perspective as he highlights, interprets, and extrapolates the events as they unfold. He observes at close range the mobsters in the streets of Baltimore threatening the passage of Federal troops and driving Lincoln to skullduggery on the way to his first inauguration; threats to the security of Washington and fears of encirclement of the capital by both the administration and residents if both Maryland and Virginia should secede; Rebel activities in Southern Maryland at the back door of the seat of government; Annapolis as the hub of Federal mobilization; the towing of the USS *Constitution* from the naval



academy's anchorage; and the removal of the academy itself to the safety of Newport. The reader encounters the Rebel arming of the Potomac shoreline with artillery, Rebel smuggling across the Potomac from supply routes in the North, and the creation of the Potomac Flotilla; Rebel activities on the Eastern Shore, blockade running by oystermen, and eventual Yankee occupation of the peninsula. The narrative carries the reader into stories of Rebel privateers and raiders tried as pirates by the Yankees, and political prisoners held with scanty trial. Dominating the narrative are accounts of the massive mobilization of mighty armies, the confusion of operations at Yorktown, the ill-fated Peninsula Campaign of McClellan, the wrestling of Norfolk and the naval base from Rebel hands, and the final battle for Richmond. Even a veteran Navy fan and Civil War buff would be carried away by the graphic suspense of Mills' stirring account of the battle between the USS *Monitor* and CNS *Virginia* (salvaged from the burned out hulk of the USS *Merrimac*). The reader also is led through a poignant description of the horrors of the prison at Point Lookout.

There are surprising turns in the narrative. Remarkably, the book's version of the famous episode of the "French lady spy" presents Commander George N. Hollins, CSN, defector from the US Navy, as the progenitor and protagonist of the dramatic seizure by Colonel Richard Thomas Zarvona of the steamer *St. Nicholas* in an attempt to capture the *Pawnee* of the Potomac Flotilla. The colorful Zarvona, as other documentation shows, gained the adulation of the South and imprisonment in the North (and exile for the duration) for his planning of the exploit and its flamboyant conclusion. Also, the text offers rather scant treatment of the Battle of Fredericksburg (on the Rappahannock) and the siege of Petersburg (on the James) both in tide-water country and of critical importance to the course of the war.

Interspersed through the narrative are touching vignettes of people, both important and commonplace, whose lives were affected by the war: Hatty Cary, a celebrated beauty of Baltimore society and simultaneous leader of Rebel sympathizers; socialite Harry Gilmore who

conducted his gallant cavalry charge around the city; grim-faced lawyer-soldier Benjamin Butler; Franklin Buchanan, first skipper of *Virginia*; James H. Ward, creator of the Potomac Flotilla and first naval officer to die in the war; John B. Magruder, stalwart commander of Rebel forces at Yorktown; and many others.

There are moments of poignancy: Lincoln in the cabin of the revenue cutter *Miami* in agonizing conference with Chase and Stanton on the progress of the war; Lincoln in the moonlight personally reconnoitering the beaches of Ocean View, behind the Rebel lines, for possible landing sites in the forthcoming advance on Norfolk; Jefferson Davis stoically pacing the ramparts of Fort Monroe after his capture at the end of the war.

The book is profusely illustrated and handsomely bound. Much of the material offers a unique approach to what historians know of the period. It excites the reader by its style. As a contributor to Civil War history, it is a splendid addition, both to regional lore and general knowledge of the era.

DAVID C. HOLLY

Annapolis, Maryland

BRADLEY A. RODGERS, *Guardian of the Great Lakes: The U.S. Paddle Frigate Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). 214 pages, 30 illustrations, notes, source references, index. Hardcover. ISBN 0-472-09607-9. \$42.50. Paperback. ISBN 0-472-06607-2. \$18.95.

This book should have been written fifty years ago. If it had, the USS *Michigan*, the first iron-hulled steamship in the US Navy, might have survived to tell its tale in the first person.

Abel Parker Upshaw, Secretary of the Navy, was the driving force behind the innovative warship. Upon accepting his Cabinet appointment in 1841, Upshaw strove to increase the size and power of the nation's fleet and to modernize its elements. Iron hulls and steam power appeared to be the way of the future, and Upshaw decided to combine the two in an experimental vessel. Arguing that the use of iron would lead to



less expensive but stronger ships, while simultaneously promoting the country's burgeoning iron industry, Upshaw convinced Congress to grant the \$150,000 needed to fund the work.

Had Upshaw not been killed in the "Peacemaker" disaster in 1844, there might have been a whole class of steamers modeled after the USS *Michigan*, for it proved to be a remarkably successful design. It was a mid-sized warship by contemporary standards, measuring 167' in overall length with a hull beam of 27', a length to beam ratio exceeding anything attainable in wooden hulls, since wood lacked the strength that could be created with iron. Designer Samuel L. Hartt gave the *Michigan* a flat bottom, which made it stable and slight of draught, resulting in the fastest vessel in the American fleet. Two direct action, inclined condensing engines capable of producing 333 horsepower drove the paddle wheels, which measured nearly 22' in diameter and carried sixteen buckets each. The engines were so well constructed that they worked for seventy-nine years before experiencing their first breakdown. The ship was rigged originally as a barkentine, but with the easy availability of fuel at Great Lakes ports and the efficiency of its power plant, the *Michigan* seldom relied on the wind.

Despite the effectiveness of its design, *Michigan* had little direct impact on contemporary naval architecture (almost twenty years passed after its launch before the arrival of France's *Gliore* and Britain's *Warrior* sounded the death knell for wooden warships). Instead, the steamer served in relative obscurity as the Navy's main agent on the upper Great Lakes. Apart from its innovative design, the ship's service record is a significant legacy, a case made convincingly by Bradley A. Rodgers, an assistant professor in the Program in Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology at East Carolina University. Rodgers provides a comprehensive record of the *Michigan*'s involvement in freshwater events such as the enforcement of timber laws, the settlement of mining strikes, and the control of Fenian raiders. Beyond those violent episodes, Rodgers also reveals the wealth of material to be found in the day-to-day records of a hard working ship and her crew through the

late decades of the 1800s and into this century. The narrative is thoroughly documented, attractively formatted, and enhanced by informative drawings and photographs.

Since there is little in the way of broadsides and gold-lettered burgees in *Guardian of the Great Lakes*, it will not appeal to all naval history readers. It should find its way, however, to the shelves of those who study the transition from sail to steam, for Rodgers has made a valuable contribution to the literature of this period. As well, no collection dealing with Great Lakes history will be complete without this version of the *Michigan* story.

Everyone who reads about the ship and her tenacious career, and then discovers the addlepated decision of those people who sought to memorialize it, will close the pages of this book with deep regret that the *Michigan* was not preserved. That a key link between the *Constitution* and the *Warrior* was scrapped is a tragedy made a little less bitter by the publication of Rodgers' fine study.

ROBERT MALCOMSON

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IRVING H. KING, *The Coast Guard Expands, 1865–1915: New Roles, New Frontiers* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996). xii + 293 pages, illustrations, map, bibliography, notes, index. ISBN 1-55750-458-X. \$37.95.

This is Irving H. King's third history on the US Coast Guard (USCG) and its forerunners. His earlier *George Washington's Coast Guard* (1978) and *The Coast Guard Under Sail* (1989) traced the service from its birth in 1790 through the Civil War. The current volume ends with the 1915 merger of the US Life-Saving Service (USLSS) and the US Revenue Cutter Service (USRCS), creating the present-day Coast Guard. All deal with events and topics rarely ever considered by a scholar. Those interested in maritime — particularly Coast Guard — history, owe Dr. King, a historian at the USCG Academy, a tremendous debt for his efforts to fill gaps in the existing literature.

Best known for its dramatic rescues and



other humanitarian activities, the nation's oldest continuous federal seagoing service is also, by law, an armed force at all times. This contradictory duality in the Coast Guard is a direct result of the gradual absorption of the missions and heritage of at least five other agencies over the years. Of them, according to King, the Revenue Cutter Service had the predominant influence upon the shaping of the Coast Guard. Dr. King, therefore, organized his eleven chapters and shaped their contents to concentrate primarily upon the activities of the revenue cutters and their officers, both afloat and ashore.

To his credit, the professor did give some coverage to the Life-Saving Service and made mention of other predecessors. Some readers will be quick to complain that either the lifesavers or lighthouse keepers deserve the more significant role. Probably only the ghosts of former Mississippi River boat pilots, however, will lament merely two sentences being given to steamboat inspectors.

His book narrates in great detail the constant struggle of the Revenue Cutter Service to retain its identity. Once, 198 members of the 206-strong officer corps unsuccessfully petitioned for their transfer to the US Navy in hopes of receiving the same pay and benefits as naval officers. Nothing happened until the newspapers widely reported the heroic exploits of the revenue cutters and their crews, such as those in the Alaska Overland Expedition and the Spanish-American War. Congress then passed legislation in 1902 to make the rank, pay, and allowances of the Revenue Cutter Service officers equal to those of the Army and Navy. Dr. King next describes and explains the events and rationales leading to the birth of the US Coast Guard in 1915, as well as the creation of the USRC School of Instruction, the future USCG Academy. He also emphasizes the influence of the 1867 purchase of Alaska upon the Revenue Cutter Service. Not only did the service acquire many new duties, but it also had to modify its operations to accomplish them. The older missions, meanwhile, underwent evolutionary refinements, primarily from technological advancements. The famous exploits of the legendary *Bear*, *Corwin*, and *Thetis* in Alaskan waters

loom large in the narrative. Also mentioned are those of lesser known cutters. A good example is the detailed account of the *Dexter* and her rescue of the survivors from the *City of Columbus* that ran aground in Martha's Vineyard.

Besides being biased in favor of the Revenue Cutter Service, its officer corps, and the future Coast Guard Academy, Dr. King almost totally disregards the white hats. His account of an overland dogsled expedition in Siberia from the *Corwin* serves as an excellent example. He clearly identifies the officers, but not the enlisted men, stating only that a "coxswain" and two natives made up the rest of the party (page 33).

These demurs aside, Dr. King deserves praise not only for his pioneering volume, but also his earlier histories on the predecessors of the United States Coast Guard. They are likely to remain the standard works for decades.

TRUMAN R. STROBRIDGE

US Coast Guard historian (1970–1976)  
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V. E. TARRANT, *Jutland: The German Perspective: A New View of the Great Battle, 31 May 1916* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995). 315 pages. ISBN 1-55750-408-3. \$32.95.

Eighteen years after the great but inconclusive engagement in the North Sea between the British and German fleets in 1916, B. H. Liddell Hart wrote of Jutland that "no other battle in history has spilled so much ink." To the question of "why yet another book on the subject" after the passage of more than an additional half-century, V. E. Tarrant writes: "This account is unique in the English-speaking works in that it is the first to deal exclusively and in depth with the German perspective of the battle" (page 7). Presentation of the German view is based primarily upon the fifth volume of the German official history *Der Krieg in der Nordsee (The War in the North Sea)*, published in 1925, one of the seven parts of the larger *Der Krieg zur See, 1914–1918 (War at Sea, 1914–1918)*, and assorted



manuscript materials held by the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg-im-Breisgau. In addition, Tarrant made use of a number of well known memoirs and biographies.

Tarrant's claim to have produced a unique English language account of the German side of the battle is literally accurate, but not very meaningful for several reasons. In the first place, the German accounts used are for the most part obvious ones and have served previous historians, most notably Arthur J. Marder and John Campbell, while certain less well known but valuable sources have remained unexploited. In the second place, bibliographical weakness is not limited to German primary materials. Tarrant provides introductory chapters on the German Navy during the Wilhelmian era and operations before Jutland, but is apparently ignorant of the important works of Eckert Kehr, Jonathan Steinberg, Volker Berghahn, Tobias Philbin, Gary Weir, Ivo Lambi, James Goldrick, and Michael Epkenhans. Thirdly, Tarrant seems to be unaware of recent and even not so recent studies on naval gunnery and capital ship design — to say nothing of British intelligence documents on the German Navy in British archives in which he conducted some of his research. This means that much of his technical and tactical analysis is founded upon faulty understanding of basic things.

Tarrant quotes long passages from *Der Krieg in der Nordsee*, and even from translated published works such as Georg von Hase's *Kiel und Jutland*. The former at least provides a taste of narrative that is publicly unavailable in English. He provides no analysis, however, that would explain how the German perspective materially affects the existing general comprehension of the battle. The "Germanness" of the perspective is diluted significantly by the not infrequent use of British sources that are concerned with British matters (for example, see pages 87, 84, 96–97, 98), to say nothing of the passages quoted from standard general histories. Some readers will be confused by the timing error in the caption of the diagram on page 64, which compounds the problem posed by the use of Central European Summer Time as opposed to Greenwich Mean Time that is standard in most accounts. There are

ten appendices, some of which contain new useful information, but there are no photographs, and the line drawings of warships have appeared elsewhere. The provenance of the illustrations and maps, moreover, are left to the reader's imagination or knowledge of the standard literature. This volume is derivative, unreflective, and ill-informed, and as such not recommendable even (or better, especially) to general readers.

JON SUMIDA

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LISLE A. ROSE, *The Ship that Held the Line: The USS Hornet and the First Year of the Pacific War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995). ix + 309 pages, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.

CAPT. RUSSELL S. CRENSHAW, JR., USN (RET.), *The Battle of Tassafaronga* (Baltimore: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1995). vi + 214 pages, maps, photographs, chart, index. \$29.95.

The observations of World War II's fiftieth anniversary are now over, but a flood of books on that conflict continue unabated. Two recent books deal with activities in the Pacific.

Although she played an important role in the early phases of the war, the first aircraft carrier *Hornet* (CV-8) never seemed to receive the acclaim or notice as, say, the *Enterprise*, the first *Yorktown*, or the two *Lexingtons*. Samuel Eliot Morison discusses her actions (as did other historians), but their treatments were broad brush, because they were looking at these actions as part of a wider perspective. Until today, only one book written during the war has been the main source of information on the *Hornet*. Naturally, much of this information has since been revealed to be inaccurate or out of date. Thus, a new history of the carrier was needed.

Lisle A. Rose has now fulfilled this need with a fine history of CV-8. In addition to documents obtained from the Naval Historical Center, he has interviewed a number of the *Hornet's*



veterans. From these sources, he has compiled a rich, fascinating narrative of ship and crew. Personalities are important to this narrative, and Rose supplies them in abundance. Mitscher, Ring, Waldron, Widhelm, and others come alive. His description of Stanhope Ring is especially interesting, and leads the reader to wonder if the air group commander was the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time.

*The Ship that Held the Line* is not without faults, however. Dr. Rose seems rather indignant that the TBD Devastator torpedo planes were always launched last for attacks, believing they should have been sent off first so that they could have a head start before the speedier fighters caught up. It is my understanding that the torpedo planes were usually launched last because they required longer takeoff rolls than the other aircraft (catapult launches would have been too time consuming). It appears Dr. Rose is tilting at windmills on this matter, making more out of it than warranted.

He also appears to take Waldron to task for attacking the Japanese fleet at Midway without fighter support. He even mentions a possibility of charging the VT-8 leader with "criminal negligence" (page 151) in carrying out the attack. One wonders what Waldron was supposed to do in this dire situation when the battle's — let alone the war's — outcome was in doubt, but these are just a couple of minor speed bumps in the book. Dr. Rose has written an excellent and needed addition to World War II historiography.

Coming just a couple of weeks after the monumental Naval Battle of Guadalcanal (12–15 November 1942), the Battle of Tassafaronga has been overshadowed by that earlier battle as well as the Savo debacle. Yet, Tassafaronga was an important battle in its own right, although it was almost as much of a disaster for the US Navy as was Savo. Perhaps because it was such a painful defeat for the Americans, Tassafaronga has appeared as little more than a footnote in many histories of the war.

Captain Crenshaw attempts to redress this omission in *The Battle of Tassafaronga*. As the gunnery officer on the *Maury*, one of the destroyers participating in the battle, he had a

unique view of the action. Sadly, unlike *The Ship That Held the Line*, this relatively slim volume adds little to what is already known, and its structure is so unusual as to confuse the reader. After a rather long prologue describing the earlier naval battles in the Solomons, Crenshaw breaks down his description of the Tassafaronga action into several chapters.

The second chapter covers American planning and preparations for the ensuing action. The battle from the American viewpoint is detailed in the next chapter. This chapter, however, does not describe what actually occurred; rather, it recounts what the Americans believed happened at the time. Following this section are two chapters concerning the after action report sent up the chain of command by Task Force 67's commander, Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright, and the rather stinging comments of Admirals Nimitz and Halsey in their endorsements to this report.

Only after these five chapters does Crenshaw turn to the Japanese side. Chapter six deals primarily with the Type 93 Long Lance torpedo. He goes on in the following chapter to discuss the redoubtable Rear Admiral Tanaka Raizo and his earlier activities leading the famed "Tokyo Express." This chapter ends with Tanaka's vessels about to encounter the Americans off Tassafaronga. Not until some 145 pages in (almost 80 pages after discussing the American side) are the actions of the Japanese described, and like the earlier account of the Americans, this chapter consists of what the Japanese believed had happened.

The two following chapters, regarding the problems with US torpedoes and those problems associated with fire control radars and ship guns, should have been appendices. Although these weapons had (for better or worse) a great impact on the battle, the somewhat technically-oriented discussion does not advance the narrative but brings it to a halt. Not until the penultimate chapter, "Analysis and Critique," does Crenshaw bring both sides together to describe what actually happened. This is a very good and very interesting look at the overall battle. Unfortunately, it comes too late in the narrative. The book ends with an epilogue in which Captain Crenshaw reviews the actions of the opposing



commanders, again discusses the successes and failures of the Japanese and American torpedoes, as well as failures of American intelligence to discover the existence (let alone the effectiveness) of the Long Lance torpedo. He uses these failures to warn against complacency in future warfare.

Captain Crenshaw's heavy use of the early, inaccurate versions of the battle for his main discussion is confusing to a reader wanting to know what actually happened. Also, far too much distance separates the sections on the opposing sides, forcing the reader to shift back and forth in order to gain some coherency to the action — if, in fact, there ever is any coherency to battle. Sadly, *The Battle of Tassafaronga* is a badly flawed work.

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H. P. WILLMOTT, *Grave of a Dozen Schemes: British Naval Planning and the War Against Japan* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996). xviii + 316 pages, illustrations, appendices, maps, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-55750-916-6. \$36.95.

This is a gloomy account of the Royal Navy's World War II failure in Allied grand strategy against Japan. H. P. Willmott, a distinguished British author of naval history, found himself at mid-career needing a Ph.D. to teach strategy at the US National War College. This book, adapted from his dissertation, bears the strengths and weaknesses of that genre.

Here is the background: FDR believed China was a great power and vital to victory — both absurd notions. China was disorganized and cut off from contact with Western Allies. In 1943, the Anglo-American allies designated a two-ocean offensive against Japan. US forces were to island hop across the Pacific as predicted in the prewar Plan Orange. The Royal Navy was supposed to strike from India, recapture Singapore and link up with the Americans at Hong Kong,

while the British Army cleared northern Burma to reopen the Burma Road to China. The three allies would then liberate China and bomb Japan into submission from Chinese airfields.

Nimitz and MacArthur succeeded brilliantly, reaching the South China Sea by the end of 1944. The British, however, were stranded. The Army managed to block an overland Japanese assault on India, but naval planners were mired in misery, plotting forlorn operations to do England's duty (and, not incidentally, to reclaim its lost colonies). Britain ultimately launched minor campaigns, at the end of the war as the Japanese withdrew. None achieved a useful strategic objective, thus the title, *Grave of a Dozen Schemes*.

British naval staffs were riven by three problems. There were never enough ships or troops and no proper naval base. The geography of the region was daunting, and the staff was wracked by internal disputes. Churchill, ever the meddler, promoted a daffy scheme code named "Culverin" to capture the northern tip of Sumatra or perhaps a small island nearby, a route that led nowhere. Sensible goals like Rangoon or Malaya were beyond the means of a country engrossed in fighting the Nazis. Nevertheless, the generals, admirals, and prime minister wrangled to the point of desperation. Their scramblings, sly, ingenuous, or hopeless, form the core of the story.

Ned Willmott's research in newly opened British documents is a major strength. So is his pungent personal commentary, which no doubt violates academic protocols but delights the reader. The main weakness is a disconnection from events in the Pacific or even from land and air campaigns in the theater. Naval intrigues seem to float in space, remote from the rest of the war. We learn little about strategic rationales and must prowl the glossary to recall code names of tedious ideas that arise and fade away. The scanty maps neither fully display the arenas nor identify some key places, a disappointment in a work where maps ought to flare with arrows of planned attacks.

Fortunately, the exhausted British cobbled together a contingency plan. In 1945, the Royal Navy redeemed its honor by deploying a carrier task force, the largest fleet in its history relative to the times, to fight the kamikazes at Okinawa



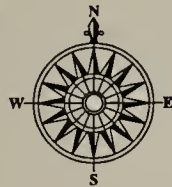
alongside the Americans. This thirteenth scheme, the one that worked, deserves more ink. The British Eastern Fleet heroically overcame logistical nightmares, suffered higher casualty rates than the US Navy, and genuinely contributed to victory. In the end, it helped execute War Plan Orange, the better strategy, to throttle Japan by a siege from the Pacific side.

The dreary failure in the Indian Ocean was summed up by an unknown British staffer and poet:

*CULVERIN — bold sounding name,  
Abortive hope, grave of a dozen schemes.  
Where brave commanders might have made  
their names  
And able planners realized their dreams.*

EDWIN S. MILLER

Washington, DC



JOHN A. LORELLI, *To Foreign Shores: U.S. Amphibious Operations in World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995). xix + 363 pages, index, maps, photographs, charts, bibliography, notes. ISBN 1-5575-0520-9. \$38.95.

An ambitious book written by a sometime historian and former Navy officer, *To Foreign Shores* does not quite work. The title is misleading, since the book is really a history of the US Navy's participation in amphibious warfare, not a balanced joint account. It is a study whose promise exceeds performance, but a book that might have filled a real need.

One of Lorelli's goals is to tell the story of the officers and men of the "gator Navy" in World War II, valiant sailors who truly found peril on the sea in their small, vulnerable, uncomfortable, and unseaworthy ships and craft. Using oral history, personal documents, and ships' logs, he does an adequate job of capturing the conditions of service of LSTs and LCIs and

their bucking brethren. Had the book been only a tribute to this group of World War II veterans, it would have been more focused and convincing, as well as more original.

Lorelli's second task is to provide an account of American amphibious operations in the war in both the Pacific and European theaters from the Navy's perspective. As a factual narrative about who landed where and against whom, *To Foreign Shores* is workmanlike. It provides strategic context (indeed, too much of it), introduces the senior commanders, provides material on the planning and execution of landing operations, and deals with all the amphibious operations in which the United States armed forces participated. Lorelli reminds us that the US Army provided the landing forces in the war against Germany as well as establishing its own amphibious engineer brigades for ship-to-shore movement and beachhead management.

The failure of *To Foreign Shores* stems from Lorelli's limited familiarity with his subject matter and his research design. This is not a book that military historians or military professionals will find very enlightening on amphibious warfare doctrine in World War II. His first misstep is to deal with amphibious warfare development in the interwar period in cursory fashion. Twenty pages on, just the American experimentation is inadequate, and he barely acknowledges the British and Japanese experience, both extensive and well documented. The curious should continue to read Isely and Crowl, *The US Marines and Amphibious Warfare* (1951), J. D. Ladd, *Assault from the Sea, 1939-1945* (1976), Kenneth J. Clifford, *Amphibious Development in Britain and America from 1920-1940* (1983), Bernard Fergusson, *The Watery Maze: The Story of Combined Operations* (1961), Rear Admiral L. E. H. Maund, RD, *Assault from the Sea* (1949), and William F. Atwater, "United States Army and Navy Development of Joint Landing Operations, 1898-1942," a Duke University dissertation completed in 1986.

Lorelli makes inadequate use of several unpublished studies of the American experience, all written by experienced officers: Colonel A. T. Mason's history of World War II amphibious operations, Lt. Col. Benjamin Gally's history of



fleet landing exercises in the 1930s, Lt. Cmdr. David L. Nutter's lengthy and very careful discussion of the development of naval gunfire doctrine, and Joint Landing Force Board, "Study of the Conduct of Training for Joint Amphibious Operations During World War II."

Lorelli's limited grasp of the operations requirements and doctrinal issues of World War II amphibious operations prevents his book from being authoritative. Some of his gaffes might be easily fixed; a discussion for example, of the differences in amphibious transports and logistics vessels, well-deck ships, beaching ships and craft, and landing craft would reduce confusion. However, he knows ships better than he knows other aspects of amphibious operations. For example, the dilemmas of fire support from the sea are barely examined, yet the development of joint air and naval gunfire support companies by the Navy and Marine Corps are barely mentioned.

Another limitation is the discussion of planning doctrine, which stressed that amphibious operations first required that the landing force commander (a Marine or Army general) develop a scheme of maneuver ashore, which would then drive planning. In truth, the doctrine never quite worked that way, since the Navy constrained such planning through shipping availability. The key was close coordination between the staffs of the Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF) and the Commander Landing Force (CLF), and a willingness to engage the next superior officer, the Joint Task Force commander, *e.g.*, a fleet commander, in the decision making process.

Admirals like Kelly Turner never seemed to get the process straight, and others like John Hall acquiesced too quickly to landing force plans (like those for Omaha Beach) that had serious flaws. Lorelli approves of an exchange between Admiral Richard L. "Close In" Connolly and General George S. Patton in which Patton admonished his staff to let the Navy plan the landing. Patton's impatient position was neither good doctrine nor good war fighting.

Distracted by his interest in the strategic context of amphibious operations, Lorelli pays inadequate attention to the serious operational problems that shaped landings. One looks in vain

for serious discussion about the formation and functions of beach parties and shore parties (they are not the same), the development of naval gunfire doctrine, the difficulties of defining and selecting the Amphibious Objective Area and Force Beachhead Line, the intricacies of combat loading, the nuances of tides and beach gradients, and the perils of weather and sea states. He does not deal with a matter of considerable importance: the failure of the Navy and Army in the European theater to profit from the rapid developments in the amphibious art during 1943–1944 in the Pacific.

When Maj. Gen. Charles H. Corlett left the 7th Infantry Division, victor of Kwajalein, to come to Europe to command the XIX Corps, he found the landing plans for Normandy appalling in their complexity and risk assumption. General Bradley and his subordinates brushed aside Corlett's objections and cited their own experience in the Mediterranean as adequate, thus forcing their soldiers to face the same errors of Salerno on D-Day. Lorelli does not mention this episode nor its implications: that joint operations remained plagued by personal, institutional, and professional irresponsibility throughout the war. Lorelli virtually ignores those senior officers who successfully overcame this barrier: Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey, Admiral Thomas C. Kincaid, and Lieutenant General Roy S. Geiger, USMC. Kelly Turner and Holland M. Smith remain more entertaining to armchair historians with their ranting and disruptive styles of command, which got many good men needlessly killed.

With the current reorientation of the US naval forces to littoral warfare (which includes amphibious operations), the American professional officer corps and civilian defense analysts need a comprehensive history of World War II amphibious warfare. *To Foreign Shores*, however, sinks somewhere between the line of departure and the high water mark.

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MAX SCHOENFELD, *Stalking the U-boat: USAAF Offensive Antisubmarine Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994). xii + 231 pages, photographs, charts, maps, appendices, abbreviations, notes, bibliography. ISBN 56098-403-1. \$37.50.

To most Americans, antisubmarine warfare in World War II is associated with naval forces, particularly destroyers and destroyer escorts, with aircraft flying off escort carriers perhaps a distant third as an element of such warfare. Even if they consider land based or long range aircraft participating in the fight against submarines, their first thoughts most likely are of Navy aircraft, such as PBVs or PB4Vs (the US Navy version of the B-24).

However, the Navy was not the only US military service involved in such warfare. For a relatively brief period, only about a year, the US Army Air Forces had a full fledged command, a couple of antisubmarine wings, a pair of B-24 equipped antisubmarine groups, the 479th and 480th Antisubmarine Groups, and some twenty-five squadrons dedicated to antisubmarine warfare (ASW). In mid-October 1942, the USAAF Antisubmarine Command (AAFAC) was activated. Less than a year later, at the end of August 1943, AAFAC was out of business. Actually, even before AAFAC's establishment, the AAF had been active against the U-boats. At the outset of the war, the service was thrust into that role, not because it was responsible for ASW or that it was well trained for the task (neither of these were true), but because it had more and longer ranged aircraft available than did the Navy. The Navy was hard pressed to come up with surface vessels, let alone planes, for sub hunting. Virtually by default, the AAF found itself taking over much of the ASW mission in the Atlantic.

The AAF also found itself in dire straits regarding the numbers of and capabilities of its aircraft and crews. Most of the best equipment was on the West coast to defend against possible Japanese thrusts to the mainland. On the East Coast, the I Bomber Command (progenitor to AAFAC) was left to handle the situation in the

Atlantic with a motley conglomeration of four-engine B-17s, twin engine B-25s and B-18s, single engine observation planes such as the O-47, and a bit later, even small private aircraft flown by the Civil Air Patrol.

Considering the impediments facing the command (lack of equipment — particularly radar — lack of personnel, lack of training), it is not surprising that its accomplishments were not eye popping. Between January and October 1942, I Bomber Command aircraft flew over 59,000 operational hours, reported slightly over two hundred sightings, and made eighty-one attacks. Out of these eighty-one attacks, only one U-boat (the *U-701*) was sunk. During the same period, one other submarine, the *U-654* was sunk by an aircraft operating out of Panama. Although almost exclusively engaged in ASW, the primary function of this plane's unit was the defense of the Panama Canal. Somewhat later, another pair of enemy submarines, the *U-512* and the Italian *Sciesa*, also fell victim to AAF aircraft.

In addition to the logistical and tactical problems confronting the AAF in its war against the U-boats, there were major doctrinal and operational control differences between the AAF and the Navy that were never solved. Neither service was sorry to see the AAFAC's disestablishment at the end of August 1943. Viewing itself as a very offensive minded service, the AAF was never comfortable with the manner the Navy conducted ASW, believing it too defensive. Also, the "turf war" over who controlled the AAF planes was contentious from the start and played as little a role as any in seeing that at this time joint air operations were just unworkable. The AAF was very happy to be relieved of its ASW duties, preferring to return to this quest of the "Holy Grail," strategic air bombardment. The Navy was also happy; it could run ASW operations the way it desired, and in the so-called "horse trade" leading to AAFAC's end, it came away with a batch of new long range aircraft (B-24s) to use against the U-boats.

First into battle, the 480th Antisubmarine Group saw action from England and North Africa between 16 November 1942 and 25 September 1943. Ironically, as Schoenfeld points out, after learning the ropes in England, where



AAFAC's offensive doctrine could be used with great effectiveness, the 480th was transferred to North Africa. There, the group came under Navy operational control and that service's much more defensive ASW orientation. Yet, from North Africa, the 480th was involved in operations almost twice as long (204 days in Morocco to 110 in England) and made almost three times the number of attacks (twenty to eight). During its operational career, the 480th was credited with sinking five and damaging nine submarines. It was involved also in air-to-air combat at least sixteen times. For its performance against the U-boats, the group received a Presidential Unit Citation.

The 479th's period of combat was much shorter than its sister group's, lasting only from its activation on 8 July 1943 until it stood down from operations at the end of October 1943. On 11 November 1943, it was disbanded. Despite this short period of activity, 479th B-24s sighted U-boats eleven times and made eight attacks. Three submarines were sunk in these attacks, although the group had to share credit for these sinkings with RAF and RCAF aircraft.

Schoenfeld's writing style is dry and somewhat technical. In fact, he spends a fair amount of pages in this relatively slim volume (194 pages of text, including appendices) discussing radar, depth charge lethal radiuses, and other such topics. His style is also occasionally confusing, as he tends to insert different topics in the middle of discussions on other subjects. Also, although *Stalking the U-boat's* subtitle is "USAAF Offensive Antisubmarine Operations in World War II," Dr. Schoenfeld almost completely ignores the early problems and operations of I Bomber Command and other AAFAC organizations in antisubmarine warfare. Granted, the 479th and 480th groups were the premier AAF antisubmarine units, and he naturally focuses on their accomplishments, but by not discussing in detail just how the AAF was drawn into ASW and the activities of AAFAC's other units, he leaves a large hole in his history of the service's antisubmarine operations.

Notwithstanding the above caveats, for those people interested in the AAF's operations in World War II, this book should be part of their

libraries. Given the paucity of published accounts of the AAF's role in antisubmarine warfare, and the probability that little else will be written on the subject, Dr. Schoenfeld's account will provide a useful (if incomplete) record of these operations.

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CARL SOLBERG, *Decision and Dissent with Halsey at Leyte Gulf* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995). 205 pages, illustrations, bibliography, essay, index. ISBN 1-55750-791-0. \$24.95.

On 24–26 October 1944, Japanese and US fleets fought a battle for Leyte Gulf, which developed into one of the largest naval engagements for all time. The struggle resulted in substantial ship losses by the Imperial Japanese Navy and ultimately Japan's loss of the Philippines and, with it, the end of Japan's access to the oil in the Dutch East Indies. Because of the high stakes, the Japanese Naval General Staff had decided to seek a decisive battle. The Japanese planners sought to use their land based air power to sink Admiral William F. Halsey's huge carrier fleet, while deploying their own carrier remnants to draw Halsey northward, away from the Philippine invasion site. The Japanese battleships and heavy cruisers would then smash the US invasion fleet and the US landing forces in Leyte Gulf.

During the battle, the Japanese simply did not have enough experienced pilots left to do serious damage to Halsey's carriers, but the remainder of their plan almost worked. The Japanese carrier force drew all of Halsey's fleet off, though at the cost of its own destruction. General Douglas MacArthur's invading forces had the luxury of their own covering fleet under Admiral T. C. Kinkaid. The outgunned Kinkaid was able to destroy one part of the Japanese surface fleet, though a larger part of that group — the Japanese center force — nearly broke



through and uncovered the approach. Had Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita, the center force commander, not lost his nerve while under attack by Kinkaid's escort carriers, he might have caught some of the invasion fleet, including twenty-four Liberty ships, in Leyte Gulf. Assault transports were in short supply, and the destruction of these ships might have delayed further landing operations for some months. The ultimate outcome of this war of attrition was never in doubt, because US forces were simply too numerous by 1944 for Japan to win.

Much controversy has swirled around Halsey's decision to chase the Japanese carriers, while leaving MacArthur's invasion forces vulnerable. Though Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the Pacific Commander in Chief, had issued somewhat ambiguous general orders, he had also warned Halsey to guarantee the safety of the invasion before taking offensive action, a sentiment that General MacArthur had loudly seconded. Nevertheless, Halsey had charged after Japanese carriers, while implying to Kinkaid that he was leaving enough battleships to deal with the Japanese center force. In fact, the battleships were with him. The responsibility for this dangerous decision seems primarily to belong to Halsey, and Carl Solberg agrees in the main.

A more interesting question arises about the adequacy of US intelligence. In *Leyte June 1944 – January 1945 Volume XII* of his *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*, Samuel Eliot Morison declared that US intelligence was poor. More recently in *Combined Fleet Decoded the Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II*, John Prados argues that the various US

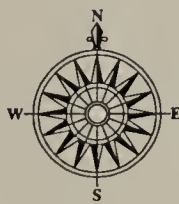
intelligence organizations provided enough information on Japanese fleet movements during the battle, but that the analysis was faulty. Solberg writes from the perspective of a junior Air Combat Intelligence officer, and he agrees with Prados. In fact, he claims that Lt. Harris J. Cox, a fellow intelligence officer on Halsey's flagship, realized that the Japanese carriers were just a decoy and that Japan's surface fleet might attack, and he laments that Cox' superiors could not get Halsey's subordinates to warn the Admiral, who had retired for the night.

Solberg attributes the deafness of the higher ups to their preference for the supposedly hard reports from the field, rather than the softer analysis of decoded Japanese plans and orders. Indeed, Halsey based his northward rush on earlier pilots' reports which claimed such crippling damage to Japan's center force that Kurita was unlikely to advance further. Such damage claims from both Japanese and US pilots proved wildly exaggerated throughout the war. In this case, however, I doubt that Halsey would have paid much attention to the brainstorm of a mere lieutenant when a chance to destroy a Japanese carrier fleet beckoned just over the horizon.

Solberg's book is a memoir wedded to a somewhat sketchy and confusing account of the battle, and it does not really analyze the strengths and weaknesses of Air Combat Intelligence. This book will interest enthusiastic students of naval operations in the Pacific and specialists in naval intelligence.

STEPHEN PELZ

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## Shorter Notices

RHYS RICHARDS, *Jorgen Jorgenson's Observations on Pacific Trade; and Sealing and Whaling in Australian Waters Before 1805* (Wellington, NZ: Paremata Press, 1996). 151 pages, index, bibliography, appendices. ISBN 0-4730-3971-0. NZ \$45.00.

Jorgen Jorgenson was an interesting adventurer, whose life included an attempted coup in Iceland and transportation for life for forgery to Van Dieman's Land. In 1804 and 1805, however, he was an early visitor to New Zealand, and in Copenhagen in 1807 published his observations, including those on whaling and sealing, in a small pamphlet. Though the actual manuscript occupies only a dozen pages of Richards' new edition, he has added extensive notes and a substantial essay which evaluates the material in the context of New Zealand history and adds various documentary material. Hitherto available, if at all, in Danish, Jorgenson's remarks are certainly a valuable addition to the early history of seafaring in New Zealand waters. (Write to: Hand in Hand Press, 76 Ranui Crescent, Khandallah, Wellington, New Zealand.)

ROBERT A. GOODSIR, *An Arctic Voyage to Baffin's Bay in Search of Friends with Sir John Franklin* (Plaistow, West Sussex: Arctic Press, 1996). 152 pages. ISBN 0-9527-3940-2. \$40.00

Robert Goodsir sailed aboard the Dundee whaler *Advice* in her attempt to search Lancaster Sound for the lost Franklin expedition in HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*. Goodsir's brother was assistant surgeon on the *Erebus*, so he did indeed have "friends" aboard. First published in London in 1850, this lively and poignant account, difficult to find in the original, is here reprinted in a limited and nicely bound edition. (Order from J & S Simper, Fallow Chase, Durfolk Wood, Plaistow, West Sussex RH14 0PL, United Kingdom. This book is limited to 500 copies.)

WILLIAM L. LOFSTROM, *Paita, Outpost of Empire: The Impact of the New England Whaling Fleet on the Socioeconomic Development of Northern Peru, 1832-1865* (Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1996). xv + 323 pages, illustrations, bibliography, appendix of American vessels calling at Paita, index. ISBN 0-9133-7274-9. \$24.95.

Paita, a remote Peruvian port, was a major whaling port-of-call in the mid-nineteenth century. William Lofstrom, a former State Department planning officer and attaché in South America, has undertaken an unusual project in his study of the effects of that fact upon the region, using as source material primarily the extensive collection of despatches from United States consuls, together with other published and unpublished material in English and Spanish. His conclusions seem unremarkable: the town was certainly impacted, but the area hardly benefited from oil cargoes that were neither owned nor consumed in the area. In fact, his book seems far more to be about the small expatriate world of the consuls and the seamen's hospital than about Peru and Peruvians. Nor is it really about the whalers or representative of their perspective, in part, at least, since few logs and journals have been used — although admittedly references to stopovers at an unbeloved spit like Paita are not common. However, the book is a useful piece to add to the overall puzzle of the impact of the whaling industry the world around.

DAVID H. GROVER, *The San Francisco Shipping Conspiracies of World War I* (Napa, CA: Western Maritime Press, 1995). 169 pages, illustrations, index. Paper. ISBN 0-9623-9353-3. \$11.95 postpaid.

This is a quite extraordinary tale of a half-dozen American and Mexican schooners and freighters employed in World War I — using loopholes in the ambivalent neutrality laws — to carry coal to German warships, most notably the



light cruiser *Leipzig* loitering in various Baja California bays. Several ships were also intended to run guns — not to Pancho Villa, as one might suppose, but to India in what David Grover calls a “German-Hindu Conspiracy.” While perhaps not of massive historical importance, these wild adventures are part of West Coast (and German) maritime history, told in a well researched, well illustrated, and well written account by the former academic dean of the California Maritime Academy, and all at a bargain price from the publisher. (Write to: Western Maritime Press, 677 Rio Vista Drive, Napa, CA 94558.)

JÜRGEN ROHWER, *War at Sea, 1939–1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996). 192 pages, illustrations, index of vessels. ISBN 1-5575-0915-8. No price given.

There are many oversized photo-history books on the naval side of World War II, but few like this one. Jürgen Rohwer, a leading German

naval historian, served on German destroyers and minesweepers in this War, and knows his subject. The illustrations — at least one per page — will sometimes be familiar to American audiences (particularly those from the Pacific War), but sometimes not: the frontispiece, for example is of the German battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* entering the harbor of Danzig on a friendly visit in August 1939, about to begin the war with a bombardment of the city. The text is authoritative, though it takes a second place to the illustrations (none in color). Readers may find the approach somewhat different in this translation of a work which first appeared in 1992 as *Der Krieg zur See 1939–1945*. The one full double-page picture is of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* successfully making their break up-Channel in the mist of February 1942.

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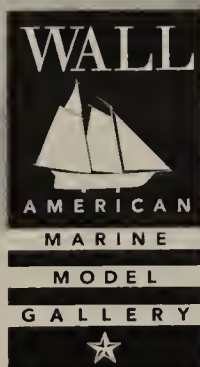
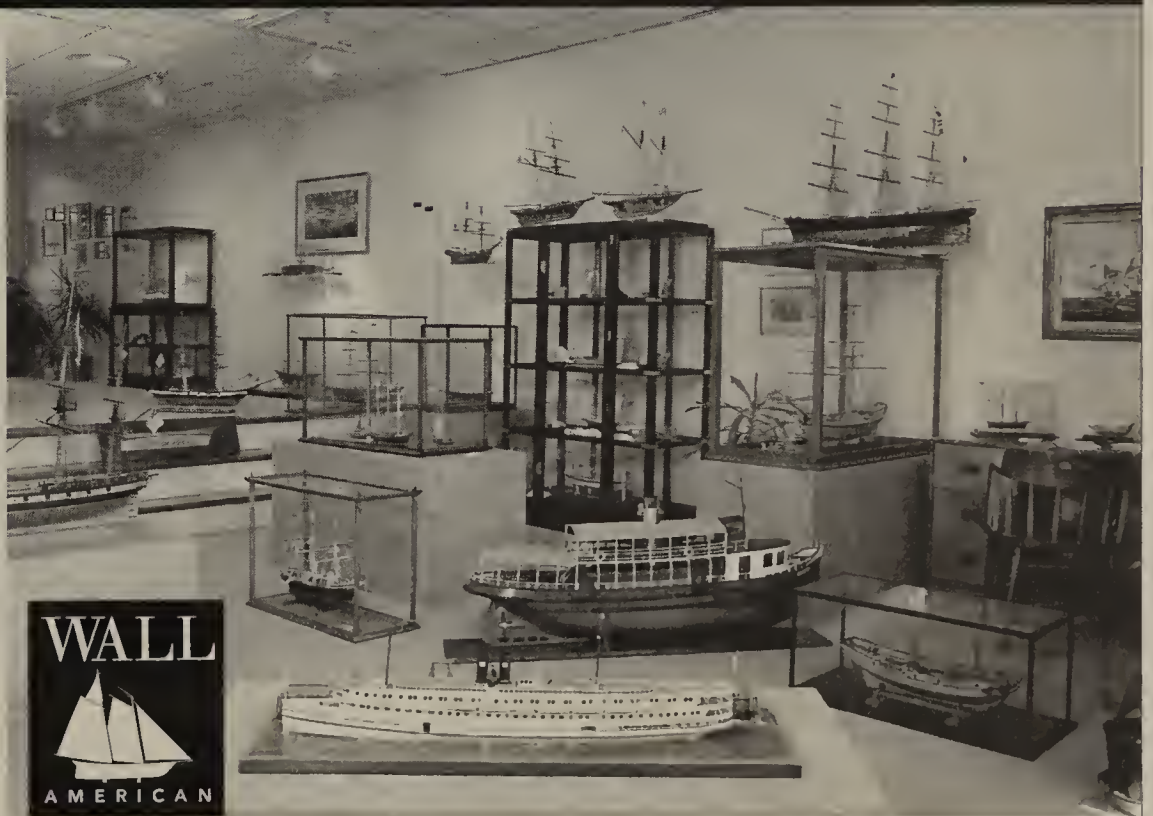
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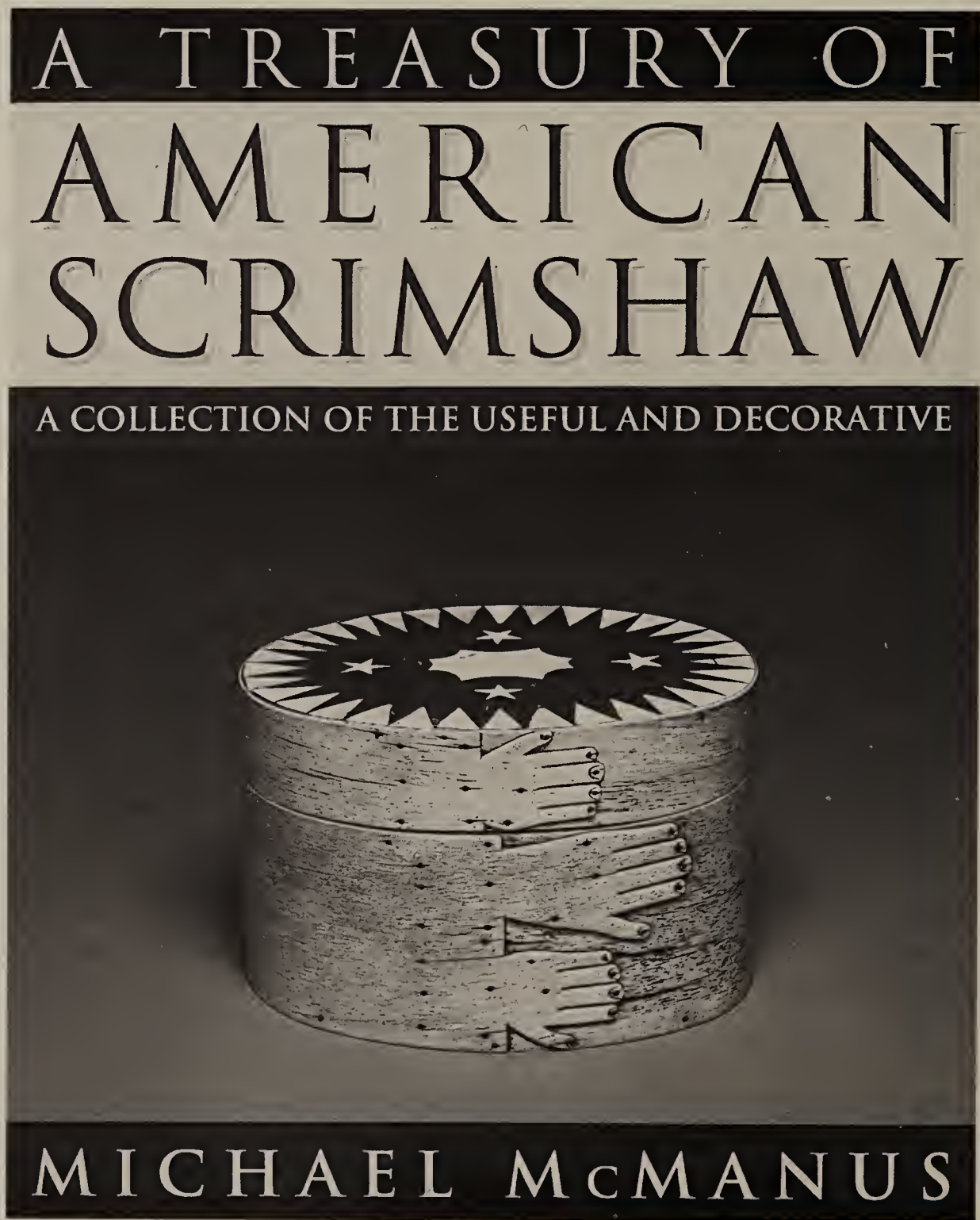
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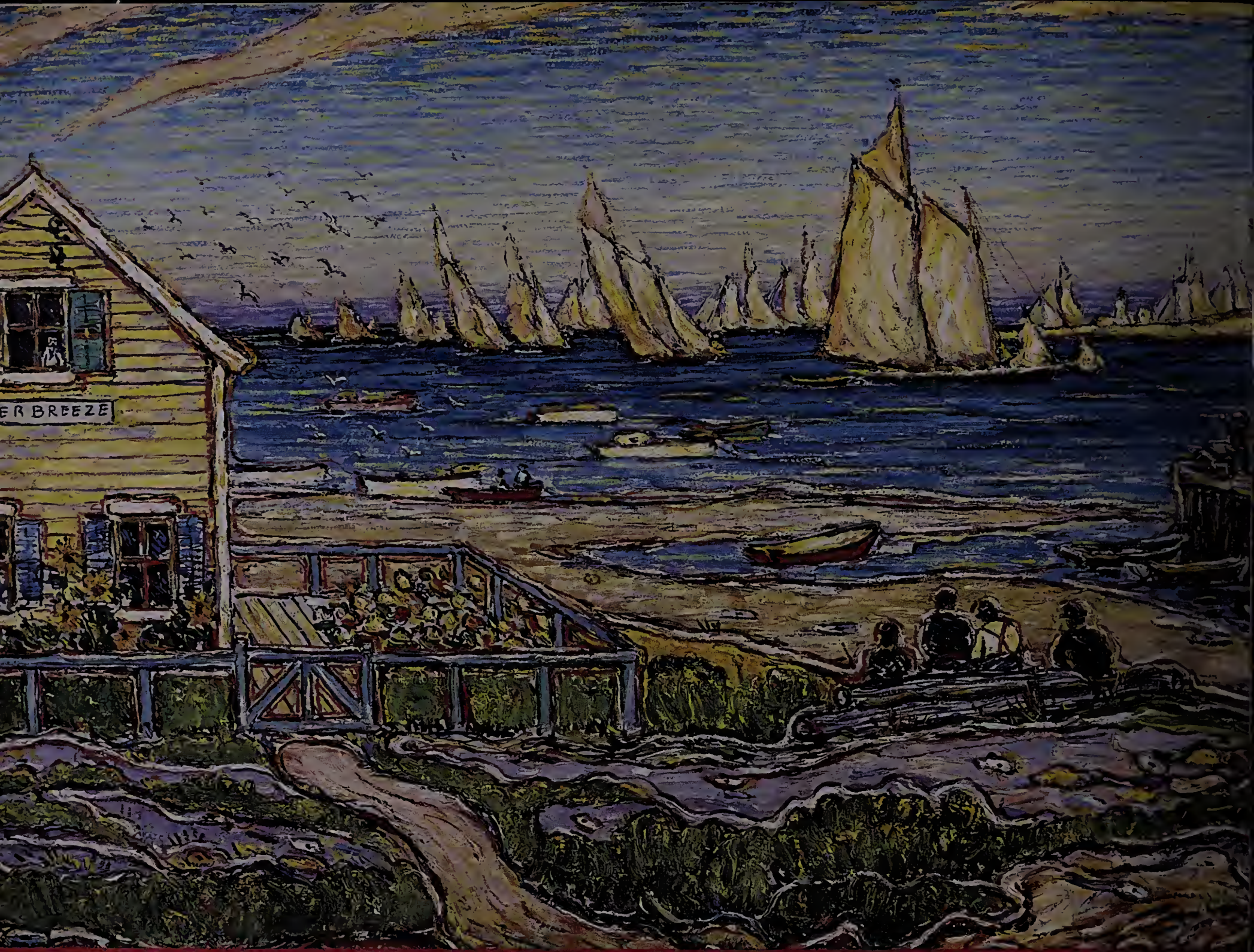
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